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Ballads and Poems

NOTE.

THE following poems have been selected as the most suitable for inclusion in a single volume, not necessarily as preferable to others which have occasionally been selected by friendly critics and anthologists from the four volumes of the author's *Collected Poems*. The Tales chosen from the *Mermaid Tavern* and *The Torch-bearers*, together with the passages from *Drake*, are complete in themselves; but the reader is asked to remember that they are integral parts of a larger whole. Some of the early poems (including *Drake*) have been revised. The full revision, which has been the work of several years, is included in the new edition of the *Collected Poems*, now in the press.

Ballads and Poems

BY

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Ballads and Poems.

THE SONG-TREE.

GROW, my song, like a tree,
As thou hast ever grown,
Since first, a wondering child,
Long since, I cherished thee.
It was at break of day,
Well I remember it,—
The first note that I heard,
A magical undertone,
Sweeter than any bird
—Or so it seemed to me ;
And my tears ran wild.
This tale, this tale is true.
The light was growing gray ;
And the rhymes ran so sweet
(For I was only a child)
That I knelt down to pray.

Grow, my song, like a tree.
Since then I have forgot
A thousand dreams, but not
The song that set me free,
So that to thee I gave
My hopes and my despairs,
My boyhood's ecstasy,

My manhood's prayers.

In dreams I have watched thee grow,
A ladder of sweet boughs,

Where angels come and go,
And birds keep house.

In dreams, I have seen thee wave
Over a distant land,

And watched thy roots expand,
And given my life to thee,

As I would give my grave.

Grow, my song, like a tree,

And when I am grown old,
Let me die under thee,

Die to enrich thy mould ;
Die at thy roots, and so

Help thee to grow.
Make of this body and blood

Thy sempiternal food.

Then let some little child,

Some friend I shall not see,

When the great dawn is gray,

Some lover I have not known,

In summers far away,

Sit listening under thee,

And in thy rustling hear

That mystical undertone,

Which made my tears run wild,

And made thee, oh, how dear.

In the great years to be ?

I am proud then ? Ah, not so.

I have lived and died for thee.

Be patient. Grow.

Grow, my song, like a tree.

EARTH AND HER BIRDS.

(SHADOW-OF-A-LEAF SINGS.)

BRAVE birds that climb those blue
 Dawn-tinted towers,
 With notes like showers of dew
 From elf-tossed flowers,
 Shake your mad wings in mirth,
 Betray, betray
 The secret thoughts of May,
 That heaven, once more, may marry our wild earth.

Dark gypsy, she would dance
 Unmated still,
 Challenging, glance for glance,
 Her lord's high will,
 But that her thoughts take wing
 While she lies sleeping ;
 And, into glory leaping,
 Like birds, at sunrise, to her bridegroom sing.

See how with cheeks aglow
 And lips apart,
 While warm winds, murmuring low
 Lay bare her heart,
 She dreams that she can hide
 Its rosy light
 In ferns and flowers this night,
 And swim like Dian through this hawthorn-tide.

Then shame her, lavrocks, shame her,
At break of day,
That heaven may trap and tame her
This mad sweet May.
Let all your feathered choir
Leave those warm nests
Between her dawn-flushed breasts,
And soar to heaven, singing her young desire.

THE DOUBLE FORTRESS.

TIME, wouldst thou hurt us ? Never shall we grow old.
Break as thou wilt these bodies of blind clay,
Thou canst not touch us here, in our stronghold,
Where two, made one, laugh all thy powers away.

Though ramparts crumble and rusty gates grow thin,
And our brave fortress dwine to a hollow shell,
Thou shalt hear heavenly laughter, far within,
Where, young as Love, two hidden lovers dwell.

We shall go clambering up our twisted stairs
To watch the moon through rifts in our grey towers.
Thou shalt hear whispers, kisses, and sweet prayers
Creeping through all our creviced walls like flowers.

Wouldst wreck us, Time ? When thy dull leaguer brings
The last wall down, look heavenward. We have wings.

CREATION.

IN the beginning, there was nought
 But heaven, one Majesty of Light,
 Beyond all speech, beyond all thought,
 Beyond all depth, beyond all height,
 Consummate heaven, the first and last,
 Enfolding in its perfect prime
 No future rushing to the past,
 But one rapt Now, that knew not Space or Time.

Formless it was, being gold on gold,
 And void—but with that complete Life
 Where music could no wings unfold
 Until God smote the strings of strife.
 “Myself unto Myself am Throne,
 Myself unto Myself am Thrall,
 I that am All am all alone,”
 He said, “Yea, I have nothing, having all.”

And, gathering round His mount of bliss
 The angel-squadrons of His will,
 He said, “One battle yet there is
 To win, one vision to fulfil ;
 Since heaven where’er I gaze expands,
 And power that knows no strife or cry,
 Weakness shall bind and pierce My hands
 And make a world for Me wherein to die.

All might, all vastness and all glory
 Being Mine, I must descend and make
 Out of My heart a song, a story
 Of little hearts that burn and break.

Out of My passion without end
 I will make little azure seas,
 And into small sad fields descend
 And make green grass, white daisies, rustling trees."

Then shrank His angels, knowing He thrust
 His arms out East and West and gave
 For every little dream of dust
 Part of His Life as to a grave.
 ' *Enough, O Father, for Thy words*
Have pierced Thy hands ! ' But, low and sweet,
 He said ' Sunsets and streams and birds,
 And drifting clouds ! '—The purple stained His feet.—

' Enough ! ' His angels moaned in fear,
 ' *Father, Thy words have pierced Thy side !* '
 He whispered, ' Roses shall grow there,
 And there must be a hawthorn-tide,
 And ferns, dewy at dawn,' and still
 They moaned—*Enough, the red drops bleed !*
 ' And,' sweet and low, ' on every hill,'
 He said, ' I will have flocks and lambs to lead.'

His angels bowed their heads beneath
 Their wings till that great pang was gone.
Pour not Thy soul out unto Death !
 They moaned, and still His Love flowed on :
 " There shall be small white wings to stray
 From bliss to bliss, from bloom to bloom,
 And blue flowers in the wheat ; and—" ' *Stay !*
Speak not,' they cried, ' *the word that seals Thy tomb !* '

He spake—" I have thought of a little child
 That I will have there to embark
 On small adventures in the wild,
 And front slight perils in the dark ;
 And I will hide from him and lure
 His laughing eyes with suns and moons,
 And rainbows that shall not endure ;
 And—when he is weary, sing him drowsy tunes."

His angels fell before Him weeping.

‘ *Enough ! Tempt not the Gates of Hell !* ’

He said, ‘ His soul is in his keeping

That we may love each other well,

And lest the dark too much affright him,

I will strow countless little stars

Across his childish skies to light him

That he may wage in peace his mimic wars ;

And oft forget Me as he plays

With swords and childish merchandize,

Or with his elfin balance weighs,

Or with his foot-rule metes, the skies ;

Or builds his castles by the deep,

Or tunnels through the rocks, and then—

Turn to Me as he falls asleep,

And, in his dreams, feel for My hand again.

And when he is older he shall be

My friend and walk here at My side ;

Or—when he wills—grow young with Me,

And, to that happy world where once we died,

Descending through the calm blue weather,

Buy life once more with our immortal breath,

And wander through the little fields together,

And taste of Love and Death.’

THE SYMPHONY.

“Even so is our speech made up. The meaning is not complete till each word has uttered its part and passed away.”—ST AUGUSTINE.

WONDER in happy eyes
Fades, fades away :
And the angel-coloured skies
Whisper farewell.

Loveliness over the strings of the heart may stray
In fugitive melodies ;
But oh, the hand of the Master must not stay,
Even for a breath ;

For to prolong one joy, or even to dwell
On one rich chord of pain,
Beyond the pulse of the song, would untune heaven
And drown the stars in death.

So youth, with its love-note, dies ;
And beauty fades in the air ;
To make the master-symphony immortal,
And find new life and deeper wonder there.

IMMORTAL SAILS.

Now, in a breath, we'll burst those gates of gold,
And ransack heaven before our moment fails.
Now, in a breath, before we, too, grow old,
We'll mount and sing and spread immortal sails.

It is not time that makes eternity.
Love and an hour may quite outspan the years,
And give us more to hear and more to see
Than life can wash away with all its tears.

Dear, when we part, at last, that sunset sky
Shall not be touched with deeper hues than this ;
But we shall ride the lightning ere we die
And seize our brief infinitude of bliss,

With time to spare for all that heaven can tell,
While eyes meet eyes, and look their last farewell.

THE OUTLAW.

DEEP in the greenwood of my heart
 My wild hounds race.
 I cloak my soul at feast and mart,
 I mask my face ;

Outlawed, but not alone, for Truth
 Is outlawed too.
 Proud world, you cannot banish us.
We banish you.

Go by, go by, with all your din,
 Your dust, your greed, your guile.
 Proud world, your thrones can never win—
 From Her—one smile.

She sings to me in a lonely place,
 She takes my hand.
 I look into her lovely face
 And understand . . .

Outlawed, but not alone, for Love
 Is outlawed too.
 You cannot banish us, proud world.
We banish you.

Now, which is outlawed, which alone ?
 Around us fall and rise
 Murmurs of leaf and fern, the moan
 Of Paradise.

Outlawed ? Then hills and woods and streams
 Are outlawed too !
 Proud world, from our immortal dreams,
 We banish you.

A FOREST SONG.

Who would be a king
 That can sit in the sun and sing ?
 Nay. I have a kingdom of my own.
 A fallen oak-tree is my throne.

*Then, pluck the strings and tell me true
 If Cæsar in his glory knew
 The worlds he lost in sun and dew.*

Who would be a queen
 That sees what my love hath seen ?—
 The blood of myriads vainly shed
 To make one royal ruby red !

*Then tell me, music, why the great
 For quarreling trumpets abdicate
 This quick, this absolute estate ?*

Nay. Who would sing in heaven
 Among the choral Seven,
 That hears, as Love and I have heard,
 The whole sky listening to one bird ?

*And where's the ruby, tell me where,
 Whose crimsons for one breath compare
 With this wild rose, which all may share ?*

THE MAY-TREE.

THE may-tree on the hill
Stands in the night
So fragrant and so still,
So dusky white,

That, stealing from the wood
In that sweet air,
You'd think Diana stood
Before you there.

If it be so, her bloom
Trembles with bliss.
She waits across the gloom
Her shepherd's kiss.

Touch her. A bird will start
From those pure snows,—
The dark, the fluttering heart
Endymion knows.

THE WAGGON.

CRIMSON and black on the sky, a waggon of clover
 Slowly goes rumbling over the white chalk road ;
 And I lie in the golden grass there, wondering why
 So little a thing
 As the jingle and ring of the harness,
 The hot creak of leather,
 The peace of the plodding,
 Should suddenly, stabbingly, make it
 Dreadful to die.

Only, perhaps, in the same blue summer weather,
 Hundreds of years ago, in this field where I lie,
 Cædmon, the Saxon, was caught by the self-same thing :
 The serf lying, dark with the sun, on his beautiful
 wain-load,
 The jingle and clink of the harness,
 The hot creak of leather,
 The peace of the plodding ;
 And wondered, oh terribly wondered,
 That men must die.

THE HOLY CHERRY-TREE.

THE years come, and the years go.
Clouds drift, and rivers flow.

The wild flowers travel across the plains.
All things into the sunset stream.
The hills are changing like a dream.
Only the Temple of Love remains.

And, beautiful in that drifting tide,
Standing at the Temple's side,
Whispers the lovers' cherry-tree,
Kanzakura, the Tree of Love,
Older than the hills above,
Older than all but memory.

Little laughters, happy vows,
Tremble through its blossomed boughs,
Even as when, an age ago,
Nano, with her seventeen years,
Exquisite in smiles and tears,
Knelt beneath its rosy snow.

"*Boughs of April*," so she prayed
Kneeling in that dim blue shade,
"Since they say that I must wed ;
Though my father goes to find
Someone suited to his mind,
Send me one to mine instead,

“ Send me someone tall and strong,
Very handsome, too, and young ;
 (Twenty-one, I think, is well.)
Let his heart be always true,
And let Nano love him, too,
 Always, as old stories tell.

“ Let us love, and understand
At the touch of hand and hand,
 All the spirit's hidden bliss ;
And, when all sweet things are past,
In each other's arms at last
 Let us die, in one last kiss.

“ All the wise and great to-day,
Laugh such love as this away.
 That is why, I hope, you'll hear.
I am neither great nor wise.
Grant me, then, what they despise.
 This is all of Nano's prayer.”

OLD GREY SQUIRREL.

A GREAT while ago, there was a school-boy.
 He lived in a cottage by the sea ;
 And the very first thing he could remember
 Was the rigging of the schooners by the quay.

He could watch them, when he woke, from his window,
 With the tall cranes hoisting out the freight ;
 And he used to think of shipping as a sea-cook,
 And sailing to the Golden Gate.

For he used to buy the yellow penny dreadfuls,
 And read them where he fished for conger-eels,
 And listened to the lapping of the water,
 The green and oily water round the keels.

There were trawlers with their shark-mouthed flat-fish,
 And red nets hanging out to dry,
 And the skate the skipper kept because he liked 'em,
 And landsmen never knew the fish to fry.

There were brigantines with timber out of Norway,
 Oozing with the syrups of the pine.
 There were rusty dusty schooners out of Sunderland,
 And ships of the Blue Cross line.

And to tumble down a hatch into the cabin
 Was better than the best of broken rules ;
 For the smell of 'em was like a Christmas dinner,
 And the feel of 'em was like a box of tools.

And, before he went to sleep in the evening,
The very last thing that he could see
Was the sailor-men a-dancing in the moonlight
By the capstan that stood upon the quay.

*He is perched upon a high stool in London.
The Golden Gate is very far away.
They caught him, and they caged him, like a squirrel.
He is totting up accounts, and going grey.*

*He will never, never, never sail to 'Frisco.
But the very last thing that he will see
Will be sailor-men a-dancing in the sunrise
By the capstan that stood upon the quay. . . .*

*To the tune of an old concertina,
By the capstan that stood upon the quay.*

MOUNTAIN LAUREL.

(THE GREEN MOUNTAIN POET SINGS.)

I HAVE been wandering in the lonely valleys,
 Where mountain laurel grows ;
 And, in among the rocks, and the tall dark pine-trees
 The foam of its young bloom flows,
 In a riot of dawn-coloured stars, all drenched with the
 dew-fall,
 And musical with the bee.
 Let the fog-bound cities over their dead wreaths quarrel.
Wild laurel for me !

*Wild laurel—mountain laurel—
 Bright as the breast of a cloud at break of day,
 White-flowering laurel, wild mountain laurel,
 Rose-dappled snowdrifts, warm with the honey of May !
 On the happy hill-sides, in the green valleys of Connecticut,
 Where the trout-streams go carolling to the sea,
 I have laughed with the lovers of song and heard them
 singing
 Wild laurel for me !*

Far, far away is the throng that has never known beauty,
 Or looked upon unstained skies.
 Did they think that our songs would scramble for
 withered bay-leaves
 In the streets where the brown fog lies ?
 They never have seen their wings, then, beating west-
 ward,
 To the heights where song is free,
 To the hills where the laurel is drenched with the dawn's
 own colours,
Wild laurel for me !

Wild laurel—mountain laurel—

Where Robert o' Lincoln sings in the dawn and the dew.

White-flowering laurel—wild mountain laurel,

*Where song springs fresh from the heart, and the heart
is true !*

*They have gathered the sheep to their fold, but where is the
eagle ?*

*They have bridled their steeds, but when have they tamed
the sea ?*

They have caged the wings, but never the heart of the singer.

Wild laurel for me !

If I never should see you again, O lost companions,

When the rose-red month begins,

With the wood-smoke curling blue by the Indian river,

And the sound of the violins,

*In dreams the breath of your green glens would still
haunt me,*

*Where night and her stars, drawing down on blossom
and tree,*

*Turn earth to heaven, and whisper their love till day-
break.*

Wild laurel for me !

Wild laurel—mountain laurel—

Oh, mount again, wild wings, to the stainless blue,

White-flowering laurel, wild mountain laurel,

And all the glory of song that the young heart knew.

*I have lived. I have loved. I have sung in the happy
valleys,*

Where the trout-streams go carolling to the sea.

I have met the lovers of song in the sunset bringing

Wild laurel for me !

BEYOND DEATH.

I.

IN lonely bays
 Where Love runs wild,
 All among the flowering grasses,
 Where light, light, light, as a sea-bird's wing
 The chuckle of the child-god passes,
 Oh, to awake, to shake away the night
 And find you dreaming there,
 On the other side of death, with the sea-wind blowing
 round you,
 And the scent of the thyme in your hair.

II.

Though beauty perish,
 Perish like a flower,
 And song be an idle breath,
 Though heaven be a dream, and youth for but an hour,
 And life much less than death,
 And the Maker less than that He made,
 And hope less than despair,
 If Death have shores where Love runs wild,
 I think you might be there.

III.

Re-born, re-born
 From the splendid sea,
 There should you awake and sing,
 With every supple sweet from the head to the feet
 Modelled like a wood-dove's wing,—
 Oh, to awake, to shake away the night,
 And find you happy there,
 On the other side of death, with the sea-wind blowing
 round you,
 And the scent of the thyme in your hair.

THE RUSTLING OF GRASS.

I CANNOT tell why,
But the rustling of grass,
As the summer winds pass
Through this field where I lie,
Brings to life a lost day
Long ago, far away,
When in childhood I lay
Looking up at the sky
And the white clouds that pass,
Trailing isles of grey shadow
Across the gold grass.

Oh, the dreams that drift by
With the slow-flowing years,
Hopes, memories, tears,
In the rustling of grass.

THE HILL-FLOWERS.

I.

*MOVING through the dew, moving through the dew,
Ere I waken in the city—Life, thy dawn makes all things
new !*

*And up a fir-clad glen, far from all the haunts of men,
Up a glen among the mountains, oh, my feet are wings
again !*

Moving through the dew, moving through the dew,
O mountains of my boyhood, I come again to you,
By the little path I know, with the sea far below,
And above, the great cloud-galleons with their sails of
rose and snow ;

As of old, when all was young, and the earth a song un-
sung,
And the heather through the crimson dawn its Eden
incense flung
From the mountain-heights of joy, for a careless-hearted
boy,
And the lavrocks rose like fountain sprays of bliss that
ne'er could cloy,

From their little beds of bloom, from the golden gorse and
broom,
With a song to God the Giver, o'er that waste of wild
perfume ;
Blowing from height to height, in a glory of great light,
While the cottage-clustered valleys held the lilac last of
night,

So, when dawn is in the skies, in a dream, a dream, I rise,
And I follow my lost boyhood to the heights of Paradise.
Life, thy dawn makes all things new ! Hills of Youth, I
 come to you,
Moving through the dew, moving through the dew.

II.

Moving through the dew, moving through the dew;
Floats a brother's face to meet me ! Is it you ? Is it you ?
For the night I leave behind keeps these dazzled eyes still
 blind !
But oh, the little hill-flowers, their scent is wise and kind ;

And I shall not lose the way from the darkness to the day,
While dust can cling as their scent clings to memory for
 aye ;
And the least link in the chain can recall the whole again,
And heaven at last resume its far-flung harvests, grain
 by grain.

To the hill-flowers clings my dust, and though eyeless
 Death may thrust
All else into the darkness, in their heaven I put my trust ;
And a dawn shall bid me climb to the little spread of
 thyme
Where first I heard the ripple of the fountain-heads of
 rhyme.

And a fir-wood that I know, from dawn to sunset glow,
Shall whisper to a lonely sea, that swings far, far below.
Death, thy dawn makes all things new. Hills of Youth,
 I come to you,
Moving through the dew, moving through the dew.

THE TORCH.

(Sussex Landscape.)

Is it your watch-fire, elves, where the down with its
darkening shoulder

Lifts on the death of the sun, out of the valley of
thyme ?

Dropt on the broad chalk path, and cresting the ridge
of it, smoulder

Crimson as blood on the white, halting my feet as
they climb,

Clusters of clover-bloom, spilled from what negligent
arms in the tender

Dusk of the great grey world, last of the tints of
the day,

Beautiful, sorrowful, strange, last stain of that perishing
splendour.

Elves, from what torn white feet, trickled that red on
the way ?

No—from the sunburnt hands of what lovers that fade
in the distance ?

Here—was it here that they paused ? Here that the
legend was told ?

Even a kiss would be heard in this hush ; but, with
mocking insistence,

Now thro' the valley resound—only the bells of the
fold.

Dropt from the hands of what beautiful throng? Did
they cry "*Follow after,*"

Dancing into the West, leaving this token for me,—
*Memory dead on the path, and the sunset to bury their
laughter?*

Youth? Is it youth that has flown? Darkness covers
the sea.

Darkness covers the earth. But the path is here. I
assay it.

Let the bloom fall like a flake, dropt from the torch
of a friend.

Beautiful revellers, happy companions, I see and obey it;
Follow your torch in the night, follow your path to
the end.

THE HEDGE-ROSE OPENS.

How passionately it opens after rain,
 And oh, how like a prayer
 To those great shining skies ! Do they disdain
 A bride so small and fair ?
 See the imploring petals, how they part
 And utterly lay bare
 The perishing treasures of that piteous heart
 In wild surrender there.
 What ? Would'st *thou*, too, drink up the Eternal bliss,
 Ecstatically dare,
 O little bride of God, to invoke *His* kiss ?—
 But oh, how like a prayer !

THE CHELTENHAM CHIMNEY-SWEEPS.

WHEN hawthorn buds are creaming white,
 And the fool's red cap all stuck with may,
 Then lasses walk with eyes alight,
 And it's chimney-sweepers' dancing day.

For the chimney-sweeps of Cheltenham town,
 Sooty of face as a swallow of wing,
 Come whistling, fiddling, dancing down
 With white teeth flashing as they sing.

And Jack in the green, by a clown in blue,
 Walks like a two-legged bush of may,
 With the little wee lads that wriggled up the flue
 Ere Cheltenham town cried "dancing day."

For brooms were short and the chimneys tall,
 And the gypsies caught 'em these blackbirds cheap,
 So Cheltenham bought them, spry and small,
 And shoved them up in the dark to sweep.

For Cheltenham town was cruel of old,
 But she has been gathering garlands gay,
 And the little wee lads are in green and gold,
 For it's chimney-sweepers' dancing day.

And red as a rose, and blue as the sky,
 With teeth as white as their faces are black,
 The master-sweeps go dancing by,
 With a gridiron painted on every back.

But when they are ranged in the market-place,
The clown's wife comes with an iron spoon,
And cozens a penny for her sweet face
To keep their golden throats in tune.

Then, hushing the riot of that mad throng,
And sweet as the voice of a long-dead May
A wandering pedlar lifts 'em a song,
Of chimney-sweepers' dancing day ;

And the sooty faces, they try to recall . . .
As they gather around in their spell-struck rings . . .
But nobody knows that singer at all
Or the curious old-time air he sings :—

Why are you dancing, O chimney-sweeps of Cheltenham,
And where did you win you these may-coats so fine ?
For some are red as roses, and some are gold as daffodils,
But who, ah, who remembers now, a little lad of mine ?

Lady, we are dancing, as we danced in old England
When the may was more than may, very long ago :
As for our may-coats, it was your white hands, lady,
Filled our sooty hearts and minds with blossom, white
as snow.

It was a beautiful face we saw, wandering through
Cheltenham.
It was a beautiful song we heard, very far away,
Weeping for a little lad stolen by the gypsies,
Broke our hearts and filled 'em with the glory of
the may.

Many a little lad had we, chirruping in the chimney-tops,
Twirling out a sooty broom, a blot against the blue.
Ah, but when we called to him, and when he saw and
ran to her,
All our winter ended, and we freed the others too.

Then she gave us may-coats of gold and green and crimson.

Then, with a long garland, she led our hearts away,
Whispering, "Remember, though the boughs forget the hawthorn,

Yet shall I return to you, that was your lady May."

But why are you dancing now, O chimney-sweeps of Cheltenham,

And why are you singing of a May that is fled?—
Oh, there's music to be born, though we pluck the old fiddle-strings,

And a world's May awaking where the fields lay dead.

And we dance, dance, dreaming of a lady most beautiful
That shall walk the green valleys of this dark earth one day,

And call to us gently, "O chimney-sweeps of Cheltenham,
I am looking for my children. Awake, and come away."

MUSIC AND MEMORY.

MUSIC, that is God's memory, never forgets you.

Music, in atom, and star, and the falling leaf,
Binding all worlds in one, remembers for ever
The least light whisper and cry of our joy and grief ;

Chord calling to chord, through swift resurrectional
changes,

From key to key, in the long unbreakable chain . . .
All, all that we ever loved, though it sleep in the silence,
At a touch of the Master shall wake and be music
again.

THE LORD OF MISRULE.

"On May-days the wild heads of the parish would choose a Lord of Misrule, whom they would follow even into the church, though the minister were at prayer or preaching, dancing and swinging their may-boughs about like devils incarnate."—*Old Puritan Writer*.

ALL on a fresh May morning, I took my love to church,
To see if Parson Primrose were safely on his perch.
He scarce had won to *Thirdly*, or squire begun to snore,
When, like a sun-lit sea-wave,
A green and crimson sea-wave,
A frolic of madcap May-folk came whooping through
the door :

Come up, come in with streamers !
Come in with boughs of may !
Come up and thump the sexton,
And carry the clerk away.
Now skip like rams, ye mountains,
Ye little hills, like sheep !
Come up and wake the people
That parson puts to sleep.

They tickled their nut-brown tabors. Their garlands
flew in showers,
And lasses and lads came after them, with feet like
dancing flowers.

Their queen had torn her green gown, and bared a
shoulder as white,

Oh, white as the may that crowned her,

While all the minstrels round her

Tilted back their crimson hats and sang for sheer
delight :

Come up, come in with streamers !

Come in, with boughs of may !

Now by the gold upon your toe

You walked the primrose way.

Come up, with white and crimson !

Oh, shake your bells and sing.

Let the porch bend, the pillars bow,

Before our Lord, the Spring !

The dusty velvet hassocks were dabbled with fragrant
dew.

The font grew white with hawthorn. It frothed in
every pew.

Three petals clung to the sexton's beard as he mopped
and mowed at the clerk,

And "Take that sexton away," they cried.

"Did Nebuchadnezzar eat may?" they
cried.

"Nay, that was a prize from Betty," they cried, "for
kissing her in the dark."

Come up, come in with streamers !

Come in, with boughs of may !

Who knows but old Methuselah

May hobble the green-wood way ?

If Betty could kiss the sexton,

If Kitty could kiss the clerk,

Who knows how Parson Primrose

Might blossom in the dark ?

The congregation spluttered. The squire grew purple
 and all,
 And every little chorister bestrode his carven stall.
 The parson flapped like a magpie, but none could hear
 his prayers ;
 For Tom Fool flourished his tabor,
 Flourished his nut-brown tabor,
 Bashed the head of the sexton, and stormed the pulpit
 stairs.

High in the old oak pulpit
 This Lord of all misrule—
 I think it was Will Summers
 That once was Shakespeare's fool—
 Held up his hand for silence,
 And all the church grew still :
 " And are you snoring yet," he said,
 " Or have you slept your fill ?

" Your God still walks in Eden, between the ancient
 trees,
 Where Youth and Love go wading through pools of
 primroses.
 And this is the sign we bring you, before the darkness fall,
 That Spring is risen, is risen again,
 That Life is risen, is risen again,
 That Love is risen, is risen again, and Love is Lord of all.

At Paske began our morrice,
 And ere Pentecost our May ;
 Because, albeit your words be true,
 You know not what you say.
 You chatter in church like jackdaws,
 Words that would wake the dead,
 Were there one breath of life in you,
 One drop of blood," he said,

" He died and He went down to hell ! You know not what you mean.

Our rafters were of green fir. Also our beds were green. But out of the mouth of a fool, a fool, before the darkness fall,

We tell you He is risen again,

The Lord of Life is risen again,

The boughs put forth their tender buds, and Love is Lord of all ! "

He bowed his head. He stood so still,

They bowed their heads as well.

And softly from the organ-loft

The song began to swell.

Come up with blood-red streamers,

The reeds began the strain.

The vox humana pealed on high,

The Spring is risen again !

The vox angelica replied—The shadows flee away !

Our house-beams were of cedar. Come in, with boughs of may !

The diapason deepened it—Before the darkness fall,

We tell you He is risen again !

Our God hath burst his prison again !

The Lord of Life is risen again ; and Love is Lord of all.

A COINER OF ANGELS.

SOME three nights later, thro' the thick brown fog
 A link-boy, dropping flakes of crimson fire,
 Flared to the door and, through its glowing frame,
 Ben Jonson and Kit Marlowe, arm in arm,
 Swaggered into the Mermaid Inn, and called
 For red-deer pies.

There, as they supped, I caught
 Scraps of ambrosial talk concerning Will,
 His *Venus and Adonis*.

"Gabriel thought
 'Twas wrong to change the old writers and create
 A cold Adonis."

"Laws were made for Will,
 Not Will for laws, since first he stole a buck
 In Charlecote woods."

"Where never a buck chewed fern,"
 Laughed Kit, "unless it chewed the fern-seed too,
 And walked invisible."

"Bring me some wine," called Ben,
 And, thrumming with his knife upon the board,
 He chanted, while his comrade munched and smiled.

I.

Will Shakespeare's out like Robin Hood
 With his merry men all in green,
 To steal a deer in Charlecote wood
 Where never a deer was seen,

II.

He's hunted all a night of June,
He's followed a phantom horn,
He's killed a buck by the light of the moon,
Under a fairy thorn.

III.

He's carried it home with his April-hearted band.
There never was haunch so fine ;
For this buck was born in Elfin-land
And fed upon sops-in-wine.

IV.

This buck had browsed on elfin boughs
Of rose-marie and bay,
And he's carried it home to the little white house
Of sweet Anne Hathaway.

V.

"The dawn above your thatch is red !
Slip out of your bed, sweet Anne !
I have stolen a fairy buck," he said,
"The first since the world began.

VI.

"Roast it on a golden spit,
And see that it do not burn ;
For we never shall feather the like of it
Out of the fairy fern."

VII.

She scarce had donned her long white gown
And given him kisses four,
When the surly Sheriff of Stratford-town
Knocked at the little green door.

VIII.

They have gaoled sweet Will for a poacher ;
But squarely he fronts the squire,
With " When did *you* hear in your woods of a deer ?
Was it under a fairy briar ? "

IX.

Sir Thomas he puffs,—“ If God thought good
My water-butt ran with wine,
Or He dropt me a buck in Charlecote wood,
I wot it is mine, not thine!

X.

“ If *you* would eat of elfin meat,”
Says Will, “ you must blow up your horn !
Take your bow, and feather the doe
That’s under the fairy thorn !

XI.

“ If *you* would feast on elfin food,
You’ve only the way to learn !
Take your bow and feather the doe
That’s under the fairy fern ! ”

XII.

They’re hunting high, they’re hunting low,
They’re all away, away,
With horse and hound to feather the doe
That’s under the fairy spray !

XIII.

Sir Thomas he raged ! Sir Thomas he swore !
But all and all in vain,
For there never was deer in his woods before,
And there never would be again !

And, as I brought the wine—"This is my grace,"
 Laughed Kit, "Diana grant the jolly buck
 That Shakespeare stole were toothsome as this pie."
 He suddenly sank his voice,—“Hist, who comes here?
 Look—Richard Bame, the Puritan! O Ben, Ben,
 Your Mermaid Inn’s the study for the stage,
 Your only teacher of exits, entrances,
 And all the shifting comedy. Be grave!
 Bame is the godliest hypocrite on earth!
 Remember I’m an atheist, black as coal.
 He has called me Wormall in an anagram.
 Help me to bait him; but be very grave.
 We’ll talk of Venus.”

As he whispered thus,
 A long white face with small black-beaded eyes
 Peered at him through the doorway. All too well,
 Afterwards, I recalled that scene, when Bame,
 Out of revenge for this same night, I guessed,
 Penned his foul tract on Marlowe’s tragic fate;
 And, twelve months later, I watched our Puritan
 Riding to Tyburn in the hangman’s cart
 For thieving from an old bed-ridden dame
 With whom he prayed, at supper-time on Sundays.
 Like a conspirator he sidled in,
 Claspings a little pamphlet to his breast,
 While, feigning not to see him, Ben began:—

“Will’s *Venus and Adonis*, Kit, is great,
 A round, sound, full-blown piece of thorough work,
 On a great canvas, coloured like one I saw
 In Italy, by one—Titian! None of the toys
 Of artistry your lank-haired losels turn,
 Your Phyllida—Love-lies-bleeding—Kiss-me-quicks,
 Your fluttering Sighs and Mark-how-I-break-my-beats,
 Begotten like this, whenever and how you list,
 Your Moths of verse that shrivel in every taper
 But a sound piece of craftsmanship to last
 Until the stars are out. ’Tis twice the length
 Of Vergil’s books—he’s listening! Nay, don’t look!—
 Two hundred solid stanzas, think of that;
 But each a square celestial brick of gold

Laid level and splendid. I've laid bricks and know
 What thorough work is. If a storm should shake
 The Tower of London down, Will's house would stand.
 Look at his picture of the stallion,
 Nostril to croup, that's thorough finished work !

Think of that kiss of Venus ! Deep, sweet, slow,
 As the dawn breaking to its perfect flower
 And golden noon of bliss, then slow, sweet, deep,
 Like a great honeyed sunset it dissolves
 Away ! ”

A hollow groan, like a bass viol,
 Resounded thro' the room. Up started Kit
 In feigned alarm—“ What, Master Richard Bame !
 Quick, Ben, the good man's ill. Bring him some wine !
 Red wine for Master Bame, the blood of Venus
 That stained the rose ! ”

“ White wine for Master Bame,”
 Ben echoed, “ Juno's cream that ” . . . Both at once
 They thrust a wine-cup to the sallow lips.
 “ Sirs, you mistake ! ” coughed Bame, waving his hands
 And struggling to his feet.

“ Sirs, I have brought
 A message from a youth who walked with you
 In wantonness, aforetime, and is now
 Groaning in sulphurous fires ! ”

“ Kit, that means hell ! ”
 “ Yea, sirs, a pamphlet from the pit of hell,
 Written by Robert Greene before he died.
 Mark what he styles it—*A Groatsworth of Wit
 Bought with a Million of Repentance !* ”

“ Ah,
 Poor Rob was all his life-time either drunk,
 Wenching, or penitent, Ben ! Poor lad, he died
 Young. Let me see now, Master Bame, you say
 Rob Greene wrote this on earth before he died,
 And then you printed it yourself in hell ! ”

“ Stay, sir, I came not to this haunt of sin
 To make mirth for Beëlzebub ! ”

“ O Ben,
 That's you ! ”

“Swounds, sir, am I Beëlzebub?
Ogs-gogs!” roared Ben, his hand upon his hilt!
“Nay, sir, I signified the god of flies!
I spake out of the Scriptures!” snuffled Bame
With deprecating eye.

“I come to save
A brand that has been kindled at this Inn,
But not yet charred, not yet so far consumed,
One Richard Cholmeley, who declares to all
He was persuaded to turn Atheist
By Marlowe’s reasoning. I have wrestled with him,
But find him still so constant to your words
That only you can save him from the pit.”

“Why, Master Bame,” said Kit, “had I the keys
To hell, the damned should all come out and dance
A morrice round the Mermaid Inn to-night.”

“Nay, sir, the damned are damned!”

“Come sit you down!
Take some more wine! You’d have them all be damned
Except Dick Cholmeley. What must I unsay
To save him?” A quick eye-lid dropt at Ben.

“Now tell me, Master Bame!”

“Sir, he derides

The books of Moses!”

“Bame, do you believe?—
There’s none to hear us but Beëlzebub—
Do you believe that we must taste of death
Because God set a foolish naked wench
Too near an apple-tree, how long ago?
Five thousand years? But there were men on earth
Long before that!” “Come, come, sir, if you read
The books of Moses . . .” “Moses was a juggler!”
“A juggler, sir, how, what!” “Nay, sir, be calm!
Take some more wine—the white, if that’s too red,—
And talk of Moses quietly. Help yourself
To red-deer pie. Good! All the miracles
You say that he performed—why, what are they?
I know one Heriots, lives in Friday Street,
Can do much more than Moses! Eat your pie
In patience, friend, the mouth of man performs
One good work at a time. What says he, Ben?”

The red deer stops his—what ? Sticks in his gizzard ?
 Oh—*led them through the wilderness !* No doubt
 He did—for forty years, and might have made
 The journey in six months. Believe me, sir,
 That is no miracle. Moses gulled the Jews !
 Versed in the sly tricks of the Egyptians,
 Only one art betrayed him. Sir, his books
 Are filthily written. I would undertake—
 If I were put to write a new religion—
 A method far more admirable. Eh, what ?
Gruel in the vestibule ? Interpret, Ben.
 His mouth's too full. Oh, *the New Testament !*
 Why, there, consider, were not all the Apostles
 Fishermen and base fellows, without wit
 Or worth ? The Apostle Paul alone had wit,
 And he was a timorous fellow in bidding men
 Subject themselves to worldly magistrates
 Against their conscience. I shall fry for this ?
 I fear no bug-bears or hob-goblins, sir,
 And would have all men not to be afraid
 Of roasting, toasting, pitch-forks, or the threats
 Of earthly ministers, tho' their mouths be stuffed
 With curses or with crusts of red-deer pie !
 One thing I will confess. If I must choose—
 Give me the Papists that can serve their God
 Not with your scraps, but solemn ceremonies,
 Organs, and singing men, and shaven crowns.
 Your Protestant is a hypocritical ass ! ”

“ Profligate ! You blaspheme ! ” Up started Bame,
 A little unsteady now upon his feet,
 And shaking his crumpled pamphlet over his head :

“ Nay—if your pie be done, you shall partake
 A second course. Be seated, sir, I pray.
 We atheists will pay the reckoning.
 I had forgotten that a Puritan
 Will swallow Moses like a red-deer pie
 Yet choke at a wax-candle ! Let me read
 Your pamphlet. What, 'tis half addressed to me !
 Ogs-gogs ! Ben ! Hark to this—the Testament

Of poor Rob Greene will cut Will Shakespeare off
With less than his own Groatsworth. Hark to this."

And there, unseen by them, a quiet figure
Entered the room and beckoning me for wine
Seated himself to listen, Will himself,
While Marlowe read aloud with knitted brows.
" ' *Trust them not ; for there is an upstart crow
Beautified with our feathers !* ' "

—Oh, he bids
All green eyes open !—' *And, being an absolute
Johannes fac-totum, is in his own conceit
The only Shake-scene in a country.* ' "

" Feathers ! "

Exploded Ben, " Why, come to that, he pouched
Your eagle's feather of blank verse, and lit
His Friar Bacon's little magic lamp
At the Promethean fire of Faustus. Jove,
It was a faëry buck, indeed, that Will
Poached in that green-wood."

" Ben, see that you walk
Like Adam, naked ! Nay, in nakedness
Adam was first. Trust me, you'll not escape
This calumny ! Vergil is damned—he wears
A hen-coop round his waist, nicked in the night
From Homer ! Plato is branded for a thief.
Why, he wrote Greek ! And old Prometheus, too,
Who stole his fire from heaven ! "

" Who printed it ? "

" Chettle ! I know not why, unless he too
Be one of these same dwarfs that find the world
Too narrow for their jealousies. Ben, Ben,
I tell thee 'tis the dwarfs that find no world
Wide enough for their jostling, while the giants,
The gods themselves, can in one tavern find
Room wide enough to swallow the wide heaven
With all its crowded solitary stars."

" Ah, but the Mermaid, then, must swallow this,"
The voice of Shakespeare quietly broke in,

As laying a hand on either shoulder of Kit
He stood behind him in the gloom and smiled
Across the table at Ben, whose eyes still blazed
With boyhood's generous wrath. "Rob was a poet.
And had I known . . . no matter! I am sorry
He thought I wronged him. His heart's blood beats in
this.

Look, where he says he dies forsaken, Kit!"
"Died drunk, more like," growled Ben. "And if he did,"
Will answered, "none was there to help him home,
Had not a poor old cobbler chanced upon him
Dying in the streets, and taken him to his house,
And let him break his heart on his own bed.
Read his last words. You know he left his wife
And played the moth at tavern tapers, burnt
His wings and dropt into the mud. Read here,
His dying words to his forsaken wife,
Written in blood, Ben, blood. Read it. '*I charge thee,
Doll, by the love of our youth, by my soul's rest,
See this man paid! Had he not succoured me
I had died in the streets.*' How young he was to call
Thus on their poor dead youth, this withered shadow
That once was Robin Greene. He left a child—
See—in its face he prays her not to find
The father's, but her own. '*He is yet green
And may grow straight,*' so flickers his last jest,
Then out for ever. At the last he begged
A penny-pott of malmsey. In the bill,
All's printed now for crows and daws to peck,
You'll find four shillings for his winding-sheet.
He had the poet's heart, and God help all
Who have that heart and somehow lose their way
For lack of helm, souls that are blown abroad
By the great winds of passion, without power
To sway them, chartless captains. Multitudes ply
Trimly enough from bank to bank of Thames
Like shallow wherries, while tall galleons,
Out of their very beauty driven to dare
The uncompassed sea, founder in starless nights,
And all that we can say is—'They died drunk!'"
"I have it from veracious witnesses,"

Bame snuffled, " that the death of Robert Greene
Was caused by a surfeit, sir, of Rhenish wine
And pickled herrings. Also, sir, that his shirt
Was very foul, and while it was at wash
He lay i' the cobbler's old blue smock, sir ! "

" Gods,"

The voice of Raleigh muttered nigh mine ear,
" I had a dirty cloak, once, on my arm ;
But a Queen's feet had trodden it. . . .

Drawer, take

Yon pamphlet, have it fried in cod-fish oil
And bring it hither. Bring a candle, too,
And sealing-wax ! Be quick. The rogue shall eat it,
And then I'll seal his lips."

" No—not to-night,"

Kit whispered, laughing, " I've a prettier plan
For Master Bame."

" As for that scrap of paper,"

The voice of Shakespeare quietly resumed,
" Why, which of us could send his heart and soul
Thro' Caxton's wooden press and hope to find
The pretty pair unmangled. I'll not trust
The spoken word, no, not of my own lips,
Before the Judgment Throne, against myself
Or on my own defence ; and I'll not trust
The printed word to mirror Robert Greene.
See—here's another Testament, in ink,
Written, not printed, for the Mermaid Inn.
Rob sent it from his death-bed straight to me.
Read it. 'Tis for the Mermaid Inn alone ;
And when 'tis read, we'll burn it, as he asks."
Then, from the hands of Shakespeare, Marlowe took
A little scroll, and while the winds without
Rattled the shutters with their ghostly hands
And wailed among the chimney-tops, he read :—

Greeting to all the Mermaid Inn
From their old Vice and Slip of Sin,
Greeting, Ben, to you, and you
Will Shakespeare and Kit Marlowe, too.
Greeting from your Might-have-been,

Your broken sapling, Robert Greene.
Read my letter—'tis my last.
Then let Memory blot me out.
I would not make my maudlin past
A trough for every swinish snout.
First, I leave a debt unpaid.
It's all chalked up, not much all told,
For Bread and Sack. When I am cold,
Doll can pawn my Spanish blade
And pay mine host. She'll pay mine host
But . . . I have chalked up other scores
In your own hearts, behind the doors,
Not to be paid so quickly. Yet,
Oh, if you would not have my ghost
Creeping in at dead of night,
Out of the cold wind, out of the wet,
With weeping face and helpless fingers
Trying to wipe the marks away,
Read what I can write, still write,
While this life within them lingers.
Let me pay, lads, let me pay.
Item, for a peacock phrase,
Flung out in a sudden blaze,
Flung out at his friend Shake-scene,
By this ragged Might-have-been,
This poor Jackdaw, Robert Greene.

Will, I knew it all the while !
And you know it—and you smile !
My quill was but a Jackdaw's feather,
While the quill that Ben, there, wields,
Fluttered down thro' azure fields,
From an eagle in the sun ;
And yours, Will, yours, no earth-born thing,
A plume of rainbow-tinctured grain,
Dropt out of an angel's wing.
Only a Jackdaw's feather mine,
And mine ran ink, and Ben's ran wine,
And yours the pure Pierian streams,
But I had dreams, oh, I had dreams !
Dreams, you understand me, Will ;

And I fretted at the tether
That bound me to the lowly plain,
Gnawed my heart out, for I knew
Once, tho' that was long ago,
I might have risen with Ben and you
Somewhere near that Holy Hill
Whence the living rivers flow.
Let it pass. I did not know
One bitter phrase could ever fly
So far through that immortal sky
—Seeing all my songs had flown so low—
One envious phrase that cannot die
From century to century.

Kit Marlowe ceased a moment, and the wind,
As if indeed the night were all one ghost,
Wailed round the Mermaid Inn, then sent once more
Its desolate passion through the reader's voice:—

Some truth there was in what I said.
Kit Marlowe taught you half your trade ;
And something of the rest you learned
From me,—but all you took you earned.
You took the best I had to give,
You took my clay and made it live ;
And that—why, that's what God must do !—
My music made for mortal ears
You flung to all the listening spheres.
You took my dreams and made them true.
And, if I claimed them, the blank air
Might claim the breath I shape to prayer.
I do not claim it ! Let the earth
Claim the thrones she brings to birth.
Let the first shapers of our tongue
Claim whate'er is said or sung,
Till the doom repeal that debt
And cancel the first alphabet.
Yet, when like a god, you scaled
The shining crags where my foot failed ;
When I saw my fruit of the vine
Foam in the Olympian cup,

Or in that broader chalice shine
Blood-red, a sacramental drink,
With stars for bubbles, lifted up,
Through the universal night,
Up to the celestial brink,
Up to that quintessential Light
Where God acclaimed you for the wine
Crushed from those poor grapes of mine ;
Oh, you'll understand, no doubt,
How the poor vine-dresser fell,
How a pin-prick can let out
All the bannered hosts of hell.
Nay, a knife-thrust, the sharp truth—
I had spilt my wine of youth,
The Temple was not mine to build.
My place in the world's march was filled.

Yet—through all the years to come—
Men to whom my songs are dumb
Will remember them and me
For that one cry of jealousy,
That curse where I had come to bless,
That harsh voice of unhappiness.
They'll note the curse, but not the pang,
Not the torment whence it sprang.
They'll note the blow at my friend's back,
But not the soul stretched on the rack.
They'll note the weak convulsive sting,
Not the crushed body and broken wing.

Item,—for my thirty years,
Dashed with sun and splashed with tears,
Wan with revel, red with wine,
This Jack-o'-lanthorn life of mine.
Other wiser, happier men,
Take the full three-score-and-ten,
Climb slow, and seek the sun.
Dancing down is soon done.
Golden boys, beware, beware,—
The ambiguous oracles declare

Loving gods for those that die
 Young, as old men may ; but I,
 Quick as was my pilgrimage,
 Wither in mine April age.

Item,—one groatsworth of wit,
 Bought at an exceeding price,
 Ay, a million of repentance.
 Let me pay the whole of it.
 Lying here these deadly nights,
 Lads, for me the Mermaid lights
 Gleam as for a castaway
 Swept along a midnight sea
 The harbour-lanterns, each a spark,
 A pin-prick in the solid dark,
 That lets trickle through a ray
 Glorious out of Paradise,
 To stab him with new agony.
 Let me pay, lads, let me pay !
 Let the Mermaid pass the sentence :
 I am pleading guilty now,
 A dead leaf on the laurel-bough,
 And the storm whirls me away.

Kit Marlowe ceased ; but not the wailing wind
 That round and round the silent Mermaid Inn
 Wandered, with helpless fingers trying the doors,
 Like a most desolate ghost.

A sudden throng
 Of players bustled in, shaking the rain
 From their plumed hats. “ Veracious witnesses,”
 The snuffle of Bame arose anew, “ declare
 It was a surfeit killed him, Rhenish wine
 And pickled herrings. His shirt was very foul.
 He had but one. His doublet, too, was frayed,
 And his boots broken . . . ”

“ What ! Gonzago, you ! ”

A short fat player called in a deep voice
 Across the room and, throwing aside his cloak
 To show the woman’s robe he wore beneath,
 Minced up to Bame and bellowed—“ ’Tis such men

As you, that tempt us women to our fall,"
And all the throng of players rocked and roared,
Till at a nod and wink from Kit a hush
Held them again.

"Look to the door," he said,
"Is any listening?" The young player crept,
A mask of mystery, to the door and peeped.
"All's well! The coast is clear!"

"Then shall we tell

Our plan to Master Bame?"

Round the hushed room
Went Kit, a pen and paper in his hand,
Whispering each to read, digest, and sign,
While Ben re-filled the glass of Master Bame.
"And now," said Kit aloud, "what think you, lads?
Shall he be told?" Solemnly one or two
'Gan shake their heads with "Safety, safety, Kit!"
"Oh, Bame can keep a secret. Come, we'll tell him.
He can advise us how a righteous man
Should act. We'll let him share an he approve.
Now, Master Bame,—come closer—my good friend,
Ben Jonson here, hath lately found a way
Of—hush! Come closer—coining money, Bame."
"Coining!" "Ay, hush, now! Hearken! A certain,
sure,
And indiscoverable method, sir.
He is acquainted with one Poole, a felon
Lately released from Newgate, hath great skill
In mixture of metals—hush!—and, by the help
Of a right cunning maker of stamps, we mean
To coin French crowns, rose-nobles, pistolettes,
Angels and English shillings."

For one breath,
Bame stared at him with bulging beetle-eyes,
Then murmured shyly as a country maid
In her first wooing, "Is't not against the law?"
"Why, sir, who makes the law? Why should not Bame
Coin his own crowns like Queen Elizabeth?
She is but mortal! And consider, too,
The good works it should prosper in your hands,
Without regard to red-deer pies and wine

White as the Milky Way. Such secrets, Bame,
 Were not good for the general ; but a few
 Discreet and righteous palms, your own, my friend,
 And mine,—what think you ? ”

With a hesitant glance
 Of well-nigh child-like cunning, screwing his eyes,
 Bame laughed a little huskily and looked round
 At that grave ring of anxious faces, all
 Holding their breath and thrilling his blunt nerves
 With their stage-practice. “ And no risk ? ” breathed
 Bame,

“ No risk at all ? ” “ Oh, sir, no risk at all !
 We make the very coins. Besides, that part
 Touches not you. Yours is the honest face,
 That’s all we want.”

“ Why, sir, if you are sure
 There is no risk . . . ”

“ You’ll help to spend it. Good !
 We’ll talk anon of this, and you shall carry
 More angels in your pocket, Master Bame,
 Than ever you’ll meet in heaven. Hand on seal
 To this now, Master Bame, to prove your faith.
 Come, all have signed it. Here’s the quill, dip, write.
 Good ! ”

And Kit, pocketing the paper, bowed
 The gull to the inn-door, saying as he went,—
 “ You shall hear further when the plan’s complete
 But there’s one great condition—not one word,
 One breath of scandal more on Robert Greene.
 He’s dead ; but he was one of us. The day
 You air his shirt, I air this paper, too.”
 No gleam of understanding, even then,
 Illumed that lanthorn face : no stage, indeed,
 Has known such acting as the Mermaid Inn
 That night, and Bame but sniggered, “ Why, of course,
 There’s good in all men ; and the best of us
 Will make mistakes.”

“ But no mistake in this,”

Said Kit, “ or all together we shall swing
 At Tyburn—who knows what may leap to light ?—
 You understand ? No scandal ! ” “ Not a breath ! ”

So, in dead silence, Master Richard Bame
 Went out into the dirty drizzling night,
 To ask, as I have heard, for many a moon,
 The price of malmsey-butts and silken hose,
 And doublets slashed with satin.

As the door
 Slammed on his back, the pent-up laughter burst
 With echo and re-echo round the room,
 But ceased as Will tossed on the glowing hearth
 The last poor Testament of Robert Greene.
 All watched it burn. The black wind wailed and moaned
 Around the Mermaid as the sparks flew up.
 "God, what a night for ships upon the sea,"
 Said Raleigh, peering thro' the wet black panes.
 "Well, we may thank Him for the Little Red Ring!"
 "The Little Red Ring!" cried Kit, "the Little Red
 Ring!"

Then up stood Dekker on the old black settle.
 "Give it a thumping chorus, lads," he called,
 And sang this brave song of the Mermaid Inn:—

I.

Seven wise men on an old black settle,
 Seven wise men of the Mermaid Inn,
 Ringing blades of the one right metal,
 What is the best that a blade can win?
 Bread and cheese, and a few small kisses?
 Ha! ha! ha! Would you take them—you?
 —Ay, if Dame Venus would add to her blisses
 A roaring fire and a friend or two!

Chorus: Up now, answer me, tell me true!
 —Ay, if the hussy would add to her blisses
 A roaring fire and a friend or two!

II.

What will you say when the world is dying?
 What, when the last wild midnight falls

Dark, too dark for the bat to be flying
Round the ruins of old St Paul's ?
What will be last of the lights to perish ?
—What but the little red ring we knew,
Lighting the hands and the hearts that cherish
A fire, a fire, and a friend or two !

Chorus : Up now, answer me, tell me true !
What will be last of the stars to perish ?
The fire that lighteth a friend or two !

III.

Up now, answer me, on your mettle,
Wisest man of the Mermaid Inn,
Soberest man on the old black settle,
Out with the truth ! It was never a sin.—
Well, if God saved me alone of the seven,
Telling me *you* must be damned, or *you*,
“ This,” I would say, “ this is hell, not heaven !
Give me the fire and a friend or two ! ”

Chorus : Steel was never so ringing true :
“ God,” we would say, “ this is hell, not heaven !
Give us the fire, and a friend or two ! ”

THE COMPANION OF A MILE.

(FROM TALES OF THE MERMAID TAVERN.)

THWACK! Thwack! One early dawn, upon our door
 I heard the bladder of some motley fool
 Bouncing, and all the dusk of London shook
 With bells! I leapt from bed,—had I forgotten?—
 I flung my casement wide and craned my neck
 Over the painted Mermaid. There he stood,
 His right leg yellow and his left leg blue,
 With jingling cap, a sheep-bell at his tail,
 Wielding his eel-skin bladder,—*bang! thwack! bang!*—
 Catching a comrade's head with the recoil
 And skipping away! All Bread Street dimly burned
 Like a reflected sky, green, red and white
 With littered branches, ferns and hawthorn-clouds;
 For, round Sir Fool, a frolic morrice-troop
 Of players, poets, prentices, mad-cap queans,
 Robins and Marians, coloured like the dawn,
 And sparkling like the green-wood whence they came
 With their fresh boughs all dewy from the dark,
 Clamoured, *Come down! Come down, and let us in!*
 High over these, I suddenly saw Sir Fool
 Leap to a sign-board, swing to a conduit-head,
 And perch there, gorgeous on the morning sky,
 Tossing his crimson cocks-comb to the blue
 And crowing like Chanticleer, *Give them a rouse!*
Tickle it, tabourer! Nimble, lasses, nimble!
Tuck up your russet petticoats and dance!
Let the Cheap know it is the first of May!
 And as I seized shirt, doublet, and trunk-hose,
 I saw the hobby-horse come cantering down,

A paste-board steed, dappled a rosy white
Like peach-bloom, bridled with purple, bitted with gold,
A crimson foot-cloth on his royal flanks,
And, riding him, His Majesty of the May !
Round him the whole crowd frolicked with a shout,
And as I stumbled down the crooked stair
I heard them break into a dance and sing :

SONG.

I.

Into the woods we'll trip and go,
Up and down and to and fro,
Under the moon to fetch in may,
And two by two till break of day,
 A-maying,
 A-playing,
For Love knows no gain-saying !
Wisdom trips not ? Even so—
Come, young lovers, trip and go,
 Trip and go.

II.

Out of the woods we'll dance and sing
Under the morning-star of Spring,
Into the town with our fresh boughs
And knock at every sleeping house,
 Not sighing,
 Or crying,
Though Love knows no denying !
Then, round your summer queen and king,
Come, young lovers, dance and sing,
 Dance and sing !

" *Chorus*," the great Fool tossed his gorgeous crest,
And lustily crew against the deepening dawn,
" *Chorus*," till all the Cheap caught the refrain,
And, with a double thunder of frolic feet,
Its ancient nut-brown tabors woke the Strand :

A-maying,
A-playing,
For Love knows no gain-saying !
Wisdom trips not ? Even so,—
Come, young lovers, trip and go,
Trip and go.

Into the Mermaid with a shout they rushed
As I shot back the bolts, and *bang, thwack, bang*,
The bladder bounced about me. What cared I ?
This was all England's holy-day ! " Come in,
My yellow-hammers," roared the Friar Tuck
Of this mad morrice, " come you into church,
My nightingales, my scraps of Lincoln green,
And hear my sermon ! " On a window-seat
He stood, against the diamonded rich panes
In the old oak parlour, and, throwing back his hood,
Who should it be but Ben, rare Ben himself ?
The wild troop laughed around him, some a-sprawl
On tables, kicking parti-coloured heels,
Some with their Marians jiggling on their knees,
And, in the front of all, the motley fool
Cross-legged upon the rushes.

Oh, I knew him,—

Will Kemp, the player, who danced from London town
To Norwich in nine days and was proclaimed
Freeman of Marchaunt Venturers and hedge-king
Of English morrice-dancery for ever !
His nine-days' wonder through the country-side
Was hawked by every ballad-monger. Kemp
Raged at their shake-rag Muses. None but I
Guessed ever for what reason, since he chose
His anticks for himself and, in his games,
Was more than most May-fools fantastical.
I watched his thin face, as he rocked and crooned,
Shaking the squirrels' tails around his ears ;
And, out of all the players I had seen,
His face was quickest through its clay to flash
The passing mood. Though not a muscle stirred,
The very skin of it seemed to flicker and gleam
With little summer lightnings of the soul

At every fleeting fancy. For a man
 So quick to bleed at a pin-prick or to leap
 Laughing through hell to save a butterfly,
 This world was difficult ; and perchance he found
 In his fantastic games that open road
 Which even Will Shakespeare only found at last
 In motley and with some wild straws in his hair.

But " Drawer ! drawer ! " bellowed Friar Ben,
 " Make ready a righteous breakfast while I preach ;—
 Tankards of nut-brown ale, and cold roast beef,
 Cracknels, old cheese, flaunes, tarts, and clotted cream,
 Hath any a wish not circumscribed by these ? "

" A white-pot custard, for my white-pot queen,"
 Cried Kemp, waving his bauble, " mark this, boy,
 A white-pot custard for my queen of May,—
 She is not here, but that concerns not thee !—
 A white-pot Mermaid custard, with a crust,
 Lashings of cream, eggs, apple-pulse, and spice,
 A little sugar and manchet bread. Away !
 Be swift ! "

And as I bustled to and fro,
 The Friar raised his big brown fist again
 And preached in mockery of the Puritans
 Who thought to strip the moonshine wings from Mab,
 Tear down the May-poles, rout our English games,
 And drive all beauty back into the sea.
 Then laughter and chatter and clashing tankards drowned
 All but their May-day jollity a-while.
 But, as their breakfast ended, and I sank
 Gasping upon a bench, there came still more
 Poets and players crowding into the room ;
 And one—I only knew him as Sir John—
 Waved a great ballad at Will Kemp and laughed,
 " Atonement, Will, atonement ! "

" What," groaned Kemp,
 " Another penny poet ? How many lies
 Does *this* rogue tell ? Sir, I have suffered much
 From these Melpomenes and strawberry quills,
 And think them better at their bloody lines

On *The Blue Lady*. Sir, they set to work
 At seven o'clock in the morning, the same hour
 That I, myself, that's *Cavaliero* Kemp,
 With heels of feather and heart of cork, began
 Frolickly footing, from the great Lord Mayor
 Of London, tow'rds the worshipful Master Mayor
 Of Norwich."

"Nay, Kemp, this is a May-day tune,
 A morrice of country rhymes, made by a poet
 Who thought it shame so worthy an act as thine
 Should wither in oblivion, if the Muse
 With her Castalian showers could keep it green.
 And while the fool nid-nodded all in time,
 Sir John, in swinging measure, trolled this tale :—

I.

With Georgie Sprat, my overseer, and Thomas Slye, my
 tabourer,
 And William Bee, my courier, when dawn emblazed
 the skies,
 I met a tall young pedlar as I danced by little Sudbury,
 Head-master o' morrice dancers all, high head-borough
 of hyes ?

By Sudbury, by Sudbury, by little red-roofed Sudbury,
 He wished to dance a mile with me ! I made a courtly
 bow :
 I fitted him with morrice-bells, with treble, bass, and
 tenor bells,
 And "*Tickle your tabor, Tom,*" I cried, "*we're going to
 market now.*"

And rollicking down the lanes we dashed, and frolicking
 up the hills we clashed,
 And like a sail behind me flapped his great white
 frock a-while,
 Till with a gasp, he sank and swore that he could dance
 with me no more ;
 And—over the hedge a milk-maid laughed, *Not dance
 with him a mile ?*

" You lout ! " she laughed, " I'll leave my pail, and dance with him for cakes and ale !

I'll dance a mile for love," she laughed, " and win my wager, too.

Your feet are shod and mine are bare ; but when could leather dance on air ?

A milk-maid's feet can fall as fair and light as falling dew."

I fitted her with morrice-bells, with treble, bass, and tenor bells.

The fore-bells, as I linked them at her throat, how soft they sang !

Green linnets in a golden nest, they chirped and trembled on her breast,

And, faint as elfin blue-bells, at her nut-brown ankles rang.

I fitted her with morrice-bells that sweetened into woodbine bells,

And trembled as I hung them there and crowned her sunny brow.

" Strike up," she laughed, " my summer king ! " And all her bells began to ring,

And " *Tickle your tabor, Tom,*" I cried, " *we're going to Sherwood now !* "

When cocks were crowing, and light was growing, and horns were blowing, and milk-pails flowing,

We swam thro' waves of emerald gloom along a chestnut aisle,

Then, up a shining hawthorn-lane, we sailed into the sun again,

Will Kemp and his companion, his companion of a mile.

" Truer than most," snarled Kemp, " but mostly lies !

And why does he forget the miry lanes

By Brainford with thick woods on either side,

And the deep holes, where I could find no ease

But skipped up to my waist ? " A crackling laugh

Broke from his lips which, if he had not worn
 The cap and bells would scarce have roused the mirth
 Of good Sir John, who roundly echoed it,
 Then waved his hand and said, "Nay, but he treats
 Your morrice in the spirit of Lucian, Will,
 Who thought that dancing was no mushroom growth,
 But sprung from the beginning of the world
 When Love persuaded earth, air, water, fire,
 And all the jarring elements to move
 In measure. Right to the heart of it, my lad,
 The song goes, though the skin mislike you so.
 Three stanzas of it leap to an ecstasy
 And seize the immortal Beauty with Plotinus."
 "Nay, an there's more of it, I'll sing it, too !
 'Tis a fine tale, Sir John, I have it by heart,
 Although 'tis lies throughout." Up leapt Will Kemp,
 And crouched and swayed, and swung his bauble round,
 Marking the measure as they trolled the tale,
 Chanting alternately, each answering each.

II.

The Fool.

The tabor fainted far away behind us, but her feet that day
 They beat a rosier morrice o'er the fairy-circled green.

Sir John.

And o'er a field of buttercups, a field of lambs and
 buttercups,
 We danced along a cloth of gold, a summer king and
 queen !

The Fool.

And straying we went, and swaying we went, with
 lambkins round us playing we went ;
 Her face uplift to drink the sun, and not for me her
 smile.
 We danced, a king and queen of May, upon a fleeting
 holy-day,
 But oh, she'd won her wager, my companion of a mile !

Sir John.

Her rosy lips they never spoke, though every rosy foot-
fall broke

The dust, the dust to Eden-bloom ; and, past the
throbbing blue,
All ordered to her rhythmic feet, the stars were dancing
with my sweet,
And all the world a morrice-dance !

The Fool.

She knew not ; but I knew !
Love, like Amphion with his lyre, made all the elements
conspire
To build his world of music. All in rhythmic rank
and file,
I saw them in their cosmic dance, catch hands across,
retire, advance,
For me and my companion, my companion of a mile !

Sir John.

The little leaves on every tree, the rivers winding to
the sea,
The swinging tides, the wheeling winds, the rolling
heavens above,
Around the May-pole Igdrasil, they worked the Morrice-
master's will,
Persuaded into measure by the all-creative Love.

That hour I saw, from depth to height, this wildering
universe unite !
The lambs of God around us and His passion in every
flower !

The Fool.

His grandeur in the dust, His dust a blaze of blinding
majesty,
And all His immortality in one poor mortal hour.

And Death was but a change of key in Life the golden
 melody,
 And Time became Eternity, and Heaven a fleeting
 smile ;
 For all was each and each was all, and all a wedded unity,
 Her heart in mine, and mine in my companion of a
 mile.

Thwack ! Thwack ! He whirled his bauble round about.
 " This fellow beats them all," he cried. " The worst
 Those others wrote was that I hopped from York
 To Paris with a mortar on my head.
 This fellow sends me leaping through the clouds
 To buss the moon ! The best is yet to come.
 Strike up, Sir John ! Ha ! ha ! You know no more ? "
 Kemp leapt upon a table. " Clear the way,"
 He cried, and with a great stamp of his foot
 And a wild crackling laugh, drew all to hark.

" With hey and ho, through thick and thin,
 The hobby-horse is forgotten.

But I must finish what I begin,
 Tho' all the roads be rotten.

" By all those twenty thousand chariots, Ben,
 Hear this true tale they shall ! Now, let me see,
 Where was Will Kemp ? Bussing the moon's pale
 mouth ?

Ah, yes ! " He crouched above the listening throng,—
 "*Good as a play,*" I heard one whispering quean,—
 And, waving his bauble, shuffling with his feet
 In a dance that marked the time, he sank his voice
 As if to breathe great secrets, and so sang :—

III.

At Melford town, at Melford town, at little grey-roofed
 Melford town,

A long mile from Sudbury, upon the village green,
 We danced into a merry rout of country-folk that skipt
 about

A hobby-horse, a May-pole, and a laughing white-pot
 queen.

They thronged about us as we stayed, and there I gave
my sunshine maid

An English crown for cakes and ale—her dancing was
so true !

And “ Nay,” she said, “ I danced my mile for love ! ”
I answered with a smile,

“ ’Tis but a silver token, lass, thou’st won that wager,
too.”

I took my leash of morrice-bells, my treble, bass, and
tenor bells.

They pealed like distant marriage-bells ! And up came
William Bee,

With Georgie Sprat, my overseer, and Thomas Slye, my
tabourer,

“ Farewell,” she laughed, and vanished with a Suffolk
courtesie.

I leapt away to Rockland, and from Rockland on to
Hingham,

From Hingham on to Norwich, sirs ! I hardly heard
a-while

The throngs that followed after, with their shouting and
their laughter,

For a shadow danced beside me, my companion of a
mile !

At Norwich, by St Giles his gate, I entered, and the
Mayor in state,

With all the rosy knights and squires for twenty miles
about,

With trumpets and with minstrelsy, was waiting there to
welcome me ;

And, as I skipt into the street, the City raised a shout.

They gave me what I did not seek ! I fed on roasted
swans a week !

They pledged me in their malmsey, and they lined me
warm with ale !

They sleeked my skin with red-deer pies, and all that
 runs and swims and flies ;
 But, through the clashing wine-cups, oh, I heard her
 clanking pail.

And, rising from his crimson chair, the worshipful and
 portly Mayor
 Bequeathed me forty shillings every year that I should
 live,
 With five good angels in my hand that I might drink
 while I could stand !
 They gave me golden angels ! What I lacked they
 could not give.

They made Will Kemp, thenceforward, sirs, Freeman of
 Marchaunt Venturers !
 They hoped that I would dance again from Norwich
 up to York ;
 Then they asked me, all together, had I met with right
 May weather,
 And they praised my heels of feather, and my heart,
 my heart of cork.

.
 As I came home by Sudbury, by little red-roofed Sudbury,
 I waited for my bare-foot maid, among her satin kine.
 I heard a peal of wedding-bells, of treble, bass, and
 tenor bells :

“ Ring well,” I cried, “ this bridal morn ! You soon
 shall ring for mine ! ”

I found her foot-prints in the grass, just where she stood
 and saw me pass,
 I stood within her own sweet field and waited for my
 May.
 I laughed. The dance has turned about ! I stand
 within : she'll pass without,
 And—*down the road the wedding came, the road we
 danced that day !*

I saw the wedding-folk go by, with laughter and with minstrelsy.

I gazed across her own sweet hedge. I caught her happy smile.

*I saw the tall young pedlar pass to little red-roofed Sudbury,
His bride upon his arm, my lost companion of a mile.*

Down from his table leapt the motley Fool.
His bladder bounced from head to ducking head,
His crackling laugh rang high,—“ Sir John, I danced
In February, and the song says May !
A fig for all your poets, liars all !
Away to Fenchurch Street, lasses and lads,
They hold high revel there this May-day morn.
Away ! ” The mad-cap throng echoed the cry.
He drove them with his bauble through the door ;
Then, as the last gay kerchief fluttered out,
He gave one little sharp sad lingering cry
As of a lute-string breaking. He turned back
And threw himself along a low dark bench ;
His jingling cap was crumpled in his fist,
And, as he lay there, all along Cheapside
The happy voices of his comrades rang :

Out of the woods we'll dance and sing
Under the morning-star of Spring,
Into the town with our fresh boughs
And knock at every sleeping house,
Not sighing,
Or crying,
Though Love knows no denying !
Then, round your summer queen and king,
Come, young lovers, dance and sing,
Dance and sing !

His motley shoulders heaved. I touched his arm,
“ What ails you, sir ? ” He raised his thin white face,
Wet with the May-dew still. A few stray petals
Clung in his tangled hair. He leapt to his feet,
“ ’Twas February, but I danced, boy, danced
In May ! Can you do this ? ” Forward he bent

Over his feet, and shuffled it, heel and toe,
Out of the Mermaid, singing his old song :

A-maying,
A-playing,
For Love knows no gain-saying !
Wisdom trips not ? Even so,—
Come, young lovers, trip and go,
Trip and go.

Five minutes later, over the roaring Strand,
Chorus, I heard him crow, and half the town
Reeled into music under his crimson comb.

THE BURIAL OF A QUEEN.

(FROM TALES OF THE MERMAID TAVERN.)

'Twas on an All Souls' Eve that our good Inn
 —Whereof, for ten years now, myself was host—
 Heard and took part in its most eerie tale.

It was a bitter night ; and master Ben,
 —His hair now flecked with grey, though youth still
 fired

His deep and ageless eyes,—in the old oak-chair,
 Over the roaring hearth, puffed at his pipe ;
 A little sad, as often I found him now
 Remembering vanished faces. Yet the years
 Brought others round him. Wreaths of heliochryse
 Gleamed still in that great tribe of Benjamin,
 Burned still across the malmsey and muscadel.
 The son o' the goldsmith, Herrick,—a name like thyme
 Crushed into sweetness by a bare-foot maid
 Milking, at dewy dawn, in Elfin-land,—
 Was often among us now. But on this night
 He had forsaken us for the *Devil's Tavern*
 Where Donne and Marmion supped.

 This left with Ben,
 John Ford, wrapped in his cloak, brooding aloof,
 Drayton and Lodge and Drummond of Hawthornden.

Out in the cold dark porch, I heard a sound
 Of iron that grated on the flags. A spade
 And pick came edging through the door.

 “ Oh, room !
 Room for the master-craftsman,” muttered Ford,
 And grey old sexton Scarlet hobbled in,

He shuffled off the snow that clogged his boots,
 —On my clean rushes !—brushed it from his cloak
 Of Northern Russet, wiped his rheumatic knees,
 Blew out his lanthorn, hung it on a nail,
 Leaned his rude pick and spade against the wall,
 Flung back his rough frieze hood, flapped his gaunt arms,
 And called for ale.

“ Come to the fire,” said Lodge.

“ Room for the wisest counsellor of kings,
 The kindly sage that puts us all to bed,
 And tucks us up beneath the grass-green quilt.”

“ Plenty of work, eh Timothy ? ” said Ben.

“ Work ? Where’s my liquor ? Oh, ay, there’s work to spare,”

Old Scarlet croaked, then quaffed his creaming stoup,
 While Ben said softly—“ Pity you could not spare,
 You and your Scythe-man, some of the golden lads
 That I have seen here in the Mermaid Inn ! ”

Then, with a quiet smile he shook his head
 And turned to master Drummond of Hawthornden.
 Well—songs are good, but flesh and blood are better.
 The grey old tomb of Horace glows for me
 Across the centuries, with one little fire
 Lit by a girl’s light hand. Then, under breath
 Yet with some passion, he murmured this brief rhyme :

I.

Dulce ridentem, laughing through the ages,
Dulce loquentem, oh, fairer far to me,
 Rarer than the wisdom of all his golden pages
 Floats the happy laughter of his vanished Lalage.

II.

Dulce loquentem,—we hear it and we know it !
Dulce ridentem,—so musical and low !
 “ Mightier than marble is my song ! ” Ah, did the poet
 Know why little Lalage was mightier even so ?

III.

Dulce ridentem—thro' all the years that sever,
Clear as o'er yon hawthorn-hedge we heard her pass-
ing by—

Lalagen amabo—a song may live for ever !—
Dulce loquentem, but Lalage must die.

“ I'd like to learn that rhyme,” the sexton said.

“ I've a fine memory, sir ! If you should start me,
I shouldn't wonder but I'd call to mind
Hundreds of ancient ballads. Long 'uns, too.”
And then—a strange thing happened.

I saw John Ford
“ With folded arms and melancholy hat ”
(As in our Mermaid jest he still would sit)
Watching old Scarlet like a man in trance,
For there were times when Scarlet seemed possessed
By a strange spirit, with thoughts beyond his own,
That held his audience bound, as you shall hear.
The sexton gulped his ale and smacked his lips.
“ Work, you were saying ? ” he croaked, “ Ah, and to
spare,
We fills 'em faster than the spades can dig.”
And, all at once, the lights burned low and blue.
Ford leaned right forward, with his fierce dark eyes
Widening.

“ Why, that's a marvellous ring ! ” he said,
And pointed to the sexton's gnarled old hand
Spread on that black oak-table like the claw
Of some great bird of prey. “ A ruby worth
The ransom of a queen ! ” The fire leapt up !
The sexton stared at him ;
Then stretched his hand out, with its blue-black nails,
Full in the light, a grim earth-coloured hand,
But bare as it was born.

“ There was a ring !
I could have sworn it ! Red as blood ! ” cried Ford.
And Ben and Lodge and Drummond of Hawthornden
All stared at him. For such a silent soul
Was master Ford that, when he suddenly spake,

It struck the rest as dumb as if the Sphinx
Had opened its cold stone lips. He would sit mute
Brooding, aloof, for hours, his cloak around him,
A staff between his knees, as if prepared
For a long journey, a lonely pilgrimage
To some dark tomb ; a strange and sorrowful soul,
Yet not—as many thought him—harsh or hard,
But of a most kind patience. Though he wrote
In blood, they say, the blood came from his heart ;
And all the sufferings of this world he took
To his own soul, and bade them pasture there ;
Till out of his compassion, he became
A monument of bitterness. He rebelled ;
And so fell short of that celestial height
Whereto the greatest only climb, who stand
By Shakespeare, and accept the Eternal Law.
These find, in law, firm footing for the soul,
The strength that binds the stars, and reins the sea,
The base of being, the pillars of the world,
The pledge of honour, the pure cord of love,
The form of truth, the golden floors of heaven.
These men discern a height beyond all heights,
A depth below all depths, and never an end
Without a pang beyond it, and a hope ;
Without a heaven beyond it, and a hell.
For these, despair is like a bubble pricked,
An old romance to make young lovers weep.
For these, the law becomes a fiery road,
A Jacob's ladder through that vast abyss,
Lacking no rung from realm to loftier realm,
Nor wanting one degree from dust to wings.
These, at the last, radiant with victory,
Lay their strong hands upon the wingéd steeds
And fiery chariots, and exult to hold,
Themselves, the throbbing reins, whereby they steer
The stormy splendours.

He, being less, rebelled,
Cried out for unreined steeds, and unruléd stars,
An unprohibited ocean and a truth
Untrue ; and the equal thunder of the law
Hurled him to night and chaos, who was born

To shine upon the forehead of the day.
 And yet—the voice of darkness and despair
 May speak for heaven where heaven would not be heard,
 May fight for heaven where heaven would not prevail,
 And the consummate splendour of that strife,
 Swallowing up all discords, all defeat,
 In one huge victory, harmonising all,
 Make Lucifer, at last, at one with God.

There,—on that All Souls' Eve, you might have
 thought
 A dead man spoke, to see how Drayton stared,
 And Drummond started.

“ You saw no ruby ring,”
 The old sexton muttered sullenly. “ If you did,
 The worse for me, by all accounts. The lights
 Burned low. You caught the firelight on my fist.
 What was it like, this ring ? ”

“ A band of gold,
 And a great ruby, heart-shaped, fit to burn
 Between the breasts of Laïs. Am I awake
 Or dreaming ? ”

“ Well,—that makes the second time !
 There's many have said they saw it, out of jest,
 To scare me. For the astrologer did say
 The third time I should die. Now, did you see it ?
 Most likely some one's told you that old tale !
 You hadn't heard it, now ? ”

Ford shook his head.

“ What tale ? ” said Ben.

“ Oh, you could make a book
 About my life. I've talked with quick and dead,
 And neither ghost nor flesh can fright me now !
 I wish it was a ring, so 's I could catch him,
 And sell him ; but I've never seen him yet.
 A white witch told me, if I did, I'd go
 Clink, just like that, to heaven or t'other place,
 Whirled in a fiery chariot with ten steeds
 The way Elijah went. For I have seen
 So many mighty things that I must die
 Mightily.

“ Well,—I came, sirs, to my craft
 The day mine uncle Robert dug the grave
 For good Queen Katharine, she whose heart was broke
 By old King Harry, a very great while ago.
 Maybe you’ve heard about my uncle, sirs ?
 He was far-famous for his grave-digging.
 In depth, in speed, in neatness, he’d no match !
 They’ve put a fine slab to his memory
 In Peterborough Cathedral—*Robert Scarlet,*
Sexton for half a century, it says,
In Peterborough Cathedral, where he built
The last sad habitation for two queens,
And many hundreds of the common sort.
And now himself, who for so many built
Eternal habitations, others have buried.
Obiit anno ætatis, ninety-eight,
July the second, fifteen ninety-four.

“ We should do well, sir, with a slab like that,
 Shouldn’t we ? ” And the sexton leered at Lodge.
 “ Not many boasts a finer slab than that.
 There’s many a king done worse. Ah, well, you see,
 He’d a fine record. Living to ninety-eight,
 He buried generations of the poor,
 A countless host, and thought no more of it
 Than digging potatoes. He’d a lofty mind
 That found no satisfaction in small deeds.
 But from his burying of two queens he drew
 A mort of pleasure. Could he have buried a third,
 It would indeed have crowned his old white hairs.
 But he was famous, and he thought, perchance,
 A third would be vain glory. So he died.
 I helped him with the second.”

The old man leered
 To see the shaft go home.

Ben filled the stoup
 With ale. “ So that,” quoth he, “ began the tale
 About this ruby ring ? ” “ But who,” said Lodge,
 “ Who was the second queen ? ”

“ A famous queen,
 And a great lover ! When you hear her name,
 Your hearts will leap. Her beauty passed the bounds

Of modesty, men say, yet—she died young !
 We buried her at midnight. There were few
 That knew it ; for the high State Funeral
 Was held upon the morrow, Lammas morn.
 Anon you shall hear why. A strange thing that,—
 To see the mourners weeping round a hearse
 That held a dummy coffin. Stranger still
 To see us lowering the true coffin down
 By torchlight, with some few of her true friends,
 In Peterborough Cathedral, all alone.”

“ Old as the world,” said Ford. “ It is the way
 Of princes. Their true tears and smiles are seen
 At dead of night, like ghosts raised from the grave !
 And all the luxury of their brief, bright noon,
 Cloaks but a dummy throne, a mask of life ;
 And, at the last, drapes a false catafalque,
 Holding a vacant urn, a mask of death.
 But tell, tell on ! ”

The sexton took a draught
 Of ale and smacked his lips.

“ My uncle lived
 A mile or more from Peterborough then.
 And, past his cottage, in the dead of night,
 Her royal coach came creeping through the lanes,
 With scutcheons round it and no crowd to see,
 And heralds carrying torches in their hands,
 And none to admire, but him and me, and one,
 A pedlar-poet, who lodged with us that week
 And paid his lodging with a bunch of rhymes.
 By these, he said, my uncle Robert’s fame
 Should live, as in a picture, till the crack
 Of doom. My uncle thought that he should pay
 Four pence beside ; but, when the man declared
 The thought unworthy of these august events,
 My uncle was abashed.

And, truth to tell,
 The rhymes were mellow, though here and there he
 swerved
 From truth to make them so. Nor would he change
 ‘ June ’ to ‘ July ’ for all that we could say.
 ‘ I never said the month was June,’ he cried,

' And if I did, Shakespeare hath jumped an age !
 Gods, will you hedge me round with thirty nights ?
 " June " rhymes with " moon " ! ' With that, he flung
 them down

And strode away like Lucifer, and was gone,
 Before old Scarlet could approach again
 The matter of that four pence.

Yet his rhymes

Have caught the very colours of that night !
 I can see through them,
 Ay, just as through our cottage window-panes,
 Can see the great black coach,
 Carrying the dead queen past our garden-gate.
 The roses bobbing and fluttering to and fro,
 Hide, and yet show the more by hiding, half.
 And, like smoked glass through which you see the
 sun,
 The song shows truest when it blurs the truth.
 This is the way it goes."

He rose to his feet,

Picked up his spade, and struck an attitude,
 Leaning upon it. " I've got to feel my spade,
 Or I'll forget it. This is the way I speak it,
 Always." And, with a school-boy's rigid face,
 And eyes fixed on the rafters, he began,
 Sing-song, the pedlar-poet's bunch of rhymes :—

As I went by the cattle-shed
 The grey dew dimmed the grass,
 And, under a twisted apple-tree,
 Old Robin Scarlet stood by me.
 " Keep watch ! Keep watch to-night," he said,
 " There's things 'ull come to pass.

" Keep watch until the moon has cleared
 The thatch of yonder rick ;
 Then I'll come out of my cottage-door
 To wait for the coach of a queen once more ;
 And—you'll say nothing of what you've heard,
 But rise and follow me quick."

“ And what ’ull I see if I keep your trust,
And wait and watch so late ? ”
“ Pride,” he said, “ and Pomp,” he said,
“ Beauty to haunt you till you’re dead,
And Glorious Dust that goes to dust,
Passing the white farm-gate.

“ You are young and all for adventure, lad,
And the great tales to be told :
This night, before the clock strikes one,
Your lordliest hour will all be done ;
But you’ll remember it and be glad,
In the days when you are old ! ”

All in the middle of the night
My face was at the pane ;
When, creeping out of his cottage-door,
To wait for the coach of a queen once more,
Old Scarlet, in the moon-light,
Beckoned to me again.

He stood beneath a lilac-spray,
Like Father Time for dole,
In Reading Tawny cloak and hood,
With mattock and with spade he stood,
And, far away to southward,
A bell began to toll.

He stood beneath a lilac-spray,
And never a word he said ;
But, as I stole out of the house,
He pointed over the orchard boughs,
Where, not with dawn or sunset,
The Northern sky grew red.

I followed him, and half in fear,
To the old farm-gate again ;
And, round the curve of the long white road,
I saw that the dew-dashed hedges glowed
Red with the grandeur drawing near,
And the torches of her train.

They carried her down with singing,
With singing sweet and low,
Slowly round the curve they came,
Twenty torches dropping flame,
The heralds that were bringing her
The way we all must go.

'Twas master William Dethick,
The Garter King of Arms,
Before her royal coach did ride,
With none to see his Coat of Pride,
For peace was on the country-side,
And sleep upon the farms ;

Peace upon the red farm,
Peace upon the grey,
Peace on the heavy orchard trees,
And little white-walled cottages,
Peace upon the wayside,
And sleep upon the way.

So master William Dethick,
With forty horse and men,
Like any common man and mean
Rode on before the Queen, the Queen,
And—only a wandering pedlar
Could tell the tale again.

How, like a cloud of darkness,
Between the torches moved
Four black steeds and a velvet pall
Crowned with the Crown Imperial
And—on her shield—the lilies,
The lilies that she loved.

Ah, stained and ever stainless,
Ah, white as her own hand,
White as the wonder of that brow,
Crowned with colder lilies now,
White on the velvet darkness,
The lilies of her land !

The witch from over the water,
 The fay from over the foam,
 The bride that rode thro' Edinbro' town
 With satin shoes and a silken gown,
 A queen, and a great king's daughter,—
 Thus they carried her home,

With torches and with scutcheons,
 Unhonoured and unseen,
 With the lilies of France in the wind a-stir,
 And the Lion of Scotland over her,
 Darkly, in the dead of night,
 They carried the Queen, the Queen !

The sexton paused and took a draught of ale.
 "'Twas there," he said, "I joined 'em at the gate,
 My uncle and the pedlar. What they sang,
 The little shadowy throng of men that walked
 Behind the scutcheoned coach with bare bent heads
 I know not ; but 'twas very soft and low.
 They walked behind the rest, like shadows flung
 Behind the torch-light, from that strange dark hearse.
 And, some said, afterwards, they were the ghosts
 Of lovers that this queen had brought to death.
 A foolish thought it seemed to me, and yet
 Like the night-wind they sang. And there was one,
 An olive-coloured man,—the pedlar said
 Was like a certain foreigner that she loved,
 One Chastelard, a wild French poet of hers.
 Also the pedlar thought they sang 'farewell'
 In words like this, and that the words in French
 Were written by the hapless Queen herself,
 When as a girl she left the vines of France
 For Scotland and the halls of Holyrood :—

I.

Though thy hands have plied their trade
 Eighty years without a rest,
 Robin Scarlet, never thy spade
 Built a house for such a guest !

Carry her where, in earliest June,
 All the whitest hawthorns blow.
 Carry her under the midnight moon,
 Singing very soft and low.
 Slow between the low green larches, carry the lovely lady
 sleeping,
 Past the low white moon-lit farms, along the lilac-
 shadowed way !
 Carry her through the summer darkness, weeping, weep-
 ing, weeping, weeping !
 Answering only, to any that ask you, whence ye carry
 her,—*Fotheringhay* !

II.

She was gayer than a child !
 —*Let your torches droop for sorrow.*—
 Laughter in her eyes ran wild !
 —*Carry her down to Peterboro'.*—
 Words were kisses in her mouth !
 —*Let no word of blame be spoken.*—
 She was Queen of all the South !
 —*In the North, her heart was broken.*—
 They should have left her in her vineyards, left her heart
 to her land's own keeping,
 Left her white breast room to breathe, and left her
 light foot free to dance.
 Out of the cold grey northern mists, we carry her weeping,
 weeping, weeping,—
 O, ma patrie,
 La plus chérie,
 Adieu, plaisant pays de France !

III.

Many a red heart died to beat
 —*Music swelled in Holyrood !*—
 Once, beneath her fair white feet.
 —*Now the floors may rot with blood—*

She was young and her deep hair—
 —*Wind and rain were all her fate !—*
 Trapped young Love as in a snare.
 —*And the wind's a sword in the Canongate !*
 Edinboro' !
 Edinboro' !

*Music built the towers of Troy, but thy grey walls are built
 of sorrow !*

Wind-swept hills and sorrowful glens, of thrifty sowing
 and iron reaping,

What if her foot were fair as a sunbeam, how should it
 touch or melt your snows ?

What if her hair were a silken mesh ?

Hands of steel can deal hard blows,

Iron breast-plates bruise fair flesh !

Carry her southward, palled in purple,

Weeping, weeping, weeping, weeping,

What had their rocks to do with roses ? Body and soul
 she was all one rose.

Thus, through the summer night, slowly they went,
 We three behind,—the pedlar-poet and I,
 And Robin Scarlet. The moving flare that ringed
 The escutcheoned hearse, lit every leaf distinct
 Along the hedges and woke the sleeping birds,
 But drew no watchers from the drowsier farms.
 Thus, through a world of innocence and sleep,
 We brought her to the doors of her last home,
 In Peterborough Cathedral. Round her tomb
 They stood, in the huge gloom of those old aisles,
 The heralds with their torches, but their light
 Struggled in vain with that tremendous dark.
 Their ring of smoky red could only show
 A few sad faces round the purple pall,
 The wings of a stone angel overhead,
 The base of three great pillars, and, fitfully,
 Faint as the phosphorus glowing in some old vault,
 One little slab of marble, far away.

Yet, or the darkness, or the pedlar's words
 Had made me fanciful, I thought I saw

Bowed shadows praying in those unplumbed aisles,
Nay, dimly heard them weeping, in a grief
That still was built of silence, like the drip
Of water from a gargoyle's frozen head.

We laid her in her grave. We closed the tomb.
With echoing footsteps all the funeral went ;
And I went last to close and lock the doors ;
Last, and half frightened of the enormous gloom
That rolled along behind me as one by one
The torches vanished. Oh, I was glad to see
The moonlight on the kind turf-mounds again.

But, as I turned the key, a quivering hand
Was laid upon my arm. I turned and saw
That foreigner with the olive-coloured face.

From head to foot he shivered, as with cold.
He drew me into the shadow of the porch.
'Come back with me,' he whispered, and slid his hand
—Like ice it was !—along my wrist, and slipped
A ring upon my finger, muttering quick,
As in a burning fever, 'All the wealth
Of Eldorado for one hour ! Come back !
I must go back and see her face again !
I was not there, not there, the day she—died.
You'll help me with the coffin. Not a soul
Will know. Come back ! One moment, only one !'

I thought the man was mad, and plucked my hand
Away from him. He caught me by the sleeve,
And sank upon his knees, lifting his face
Most piteously to mine. 'One moment ! See !
I loved her !'

I saw the moonlight glisten on his tears,
Great, long, slow tears they were ; and then—my God !—
As his face lifted and his head sank back
Beseeching me—I saw a crimson thread
Circling his throat, as though the headsman's axe
Had cloven it with one blow, so shrewd, so keen,
The head had slipped not from the trunk.

I gasped ;

And, as he pleaded, stretching his head back,
The wound, oh, like a second awful mouth,
The wound began to gape.

I tore my cloak
 Out of his clutch. My keys fell with a clash.
 I left them where they lay, and with a shout
 I dashed into the broad white empty road.
 There was no soul in sight. Sweating with fear
 I hastened home, not daring to look back ;
 But as I turned the corner, I heard the clang
 Of those great doors, and knew he had entered in.

Not till I saw before me in the lane
 The pedlar and my uncle did I halt
 And look at that which clasped my finger still
 Like a thin band of ice.

My hand was bare !
 I stared at it and rubbed it. Then I thought
 I had been dreaming. There had been no ring !
 The poor man I had left there in the porch,
 Being a Frenchman, talked a little wild,
 But only wished to look upon her grave.
 And I—I was the madman ! So I said
 Nothing. But all the same, for all my thoughts,
 I'd not go back that night to find the keys,
 No, not for all the rubies in the crown
 Of Prester John.

The high State Funeral
 Was held on Lammas Day. A wondrous sight
 For Peterborough ! For myself, I found
 Small satisfaction in a catafalque
 That carried a dummy coffin. None the less,
 The pedlar thought that as a Solemn Masque,
 Or Piece of Purple Pomp, the thing was good,
 And worthy of a picture in his rhymes ;
 The more because he said it shadowed forth
 The ironic face of Death.

The Masque, indeed,
 Began before we buried her. For a host
 Of Mourners—Lords and Ladies—on Lammas eve,
 Panting with eagerness of pride and place,
 Arrived in readiness for the morrow's pomp,
 And at the Bishop's Palace they found prepared
 A mighty supper for them, where they sat

All at one table. In a long hall hung
 With scutcheons and black cloth, they drank red wine
 And feasted, while the torches and the queen
 Crept through the darkness of Northampton lanes.

At seven o'clock on Lammas morn they woke,
 After the Queen was buried ; and at eight
 The Masque set forth, thus pictured in the rhymes
 With tolling bells, which on the pedlar's lips
 Had more than paid his lodging. Thus he spake it,
 Slowly, sounding the rhymes like solemn bells,
 And tolling, in between, with lingering tongue :—

Toll !—From the Palace the Releevants creep,—
 A hundred poor old women, nigh their end,
 Wearing their black cloth gowns, and on each head
 An ell of snow-white holland which, some said,
 Afterwards they might keep,
 —*Ah, Toll !*—with nine new shillings each to spend,
 For all the trouble that they had, and all
 The sorrow of walking to this funeral.

Toll !—And the Mourning Cloaks in purple streamed
 Following, a long procession, two by two,
 Her Household first. With these, Monsieur du Preau,
 Her French Confessor, unafraid to show
 The golden Cross that gleamed
 About his neck, warned what the crowd might do,
 Said *I will wear it, though I die for it !*
 So subtle in malice was that Jesuit.

Toll !—Sir George Savile in his Mourner's Gown
 Carried the solemn Cross upon a field
 Azure, and under it by a streamer borne
 Upon a field of Gules, an Unicorn
 Argent and, lower down,
 A scrolled device upon a blazoned shield,
 Which seemed to say—I AM SILENT TILL THE END !—
Toll ! Toll !—IN MY DEFENCE, GOD ME DEFEND !

Toll ! and a hundred poor old men went by,
 Followed by two great Bishops.—*Toll, ah toll !*—
 Then, with White Staves and Gowns, four noble lords ;
 Then sixteen Scots and Frenchmen with drawn swords ;
 Then, with a Bannerol,
 Sir Andrew Noel, lifting to the sky
 The Great Red Lion. Then the Crown and Crest
 Borne by a Herald on his glittering breast.

And now—ah now, indeed, the deep bell tolls !—
 That empty Coffin, with its velvet pall,
 Borne by six Gentlemen, under a canopy
 Of purple, lifted by four knights, goes by.
 The Crown Imperial
 Burns on the Coffin-head. Four Bannerols
 On either side, uplifted by four squires,
 Roll on the wind their rich heraldic fires.

Toll ! The Chief Mourner—the fair Russell !—*toll !*—
 Countess of Bedford—*toll !*—they bring her now,
 Weeping under a purple Cloth of State,
 Till, halting there before the Minster Gate,
 Having in her control
 The fair White Staves of office, with a bow
 She gives them to her two great Earls again,
 Then sweeps them onward in her mournful train.

Toll ! At the high Cathedral door the Quires
 Meet them and lead them, singing all the while
 A mighty *Miserere* for her soul !
 Then, as the rolling organ—*toll, ah toll !*—
 Floods every glimmering aisle
 With ocean-thunders, all those knights and squires
 Bring the false Coffin to the central nave
 And set it in the Catafalque o'er her grave.

The Catafalque was made in Field-bed wise
 Valanced with midnight purple, fringed with gold.
 All the Chief Mourners on dark thrones were set
 Within it, as jewels in some huge carcanet :
 Above was this device

IN MY DEFENCE, GOD ME DEFEND, inscrolled
 Round the rich Arms of Scotland, as to say
 'Man judged me. I abide the Judgment Day.' "

The sexton paused anew. All looked at him,
 And at his wrinkled, grim, earth-coloured hand,
 As if, in that dim light, beclouded now
 With blue tobacco-smoke, they thought to see
 The smouldering ruby again.

"Ye know," he said,
 "How master William Wickham preached that day?"
 Ford nodded. "I have heard of it. He showed
 Subtly, oh, very subtly, after his kind,
 That the white Body of Beauty such as hers
 Was in itself Papistical, a feast,
 A fast, an incense, a burnt-offering,
 And an Abomination in the sight
 Of all true Protestants. Why, her very name
 Was Mary!"

"Ay, that's true, that's very true!"
 The sexton mused. "Now that's a strange deep thought!
 The Bishop missed a text in missing that.
 Her name, indeed, was Mary!"

"Did you find
 Your keys again?" "Ay, sir, I found them!" "Where?"
 "Strange you should ask me that! After the throng
 Departed, and the nobles were at feast,
 All in the Bishop's Palace—a great feast
 And worthy of their sorrow—I came back
 Carrying my uncle's second bunch of keys
 To lock the doors and search, too, for mine own.
 'Twas growing dusk already, and as I thrust
 The key into the lock, the great grey porch
 Grew cold upon me, like a tomb.

I pushed
 Hard at the key—then stopped—with all my flesh
 Freezing, and half in mind to fly; for, sirs,
 The door was locked already, and—*from within!*

I drew the key forth quietly and stepped back
 Into the Churchyard, where the graves were warm

With sunset still, and the blunt carven stones
 Lengthened their homely shadows, out and out,
 To Everlasting. Then I plucked up heart,
 Seeing the foot-prints of the mighty masque
 Along the pebbled path. A queer thought came
 Into my head that all the world without
 Was but a masque, and I was creeping back,
 Back from the mourners' Feast to Truth again.
 Yet—I grew bold, and tried the southern door.

'Twas locked, but held no key on the inner side
 To foil my own, and softly, softly, click,
 I turned it, and with heart, sirs, in my mouth,
 Pushed back the studded door and entered in . . .

Stepped straight out of the world, I might have
 said,
 Out of the dusk into a night so deep,
 So dark, I trembled like a child. . . .

And then

I was aware, sirs, of a great sweet wave
 Of incense. All the gloom was heavy with it,
 As if her Papist Household had returned
 To pray for her poor soul ; and my fear went.
 But either that strange incense weighed me down,
 Or else from being sorely overtaken,
 A languor came upon me, and sitting there
 To breathe a moment, in a velvet stall,
 I closed mine eyes.

A moment, and no more,

For then I heard a rustling in the nave,
 And opened them ; and, very far away,
 As if across the world, in Rome herself,
 I saw twelve tapers in the solemn East,
 And saw, or thought I saw, cowled figures kneel
 Before them, in an incense-cloud.

And then,

Maybe the sunset deepened in the world
 Of masques without—clear proof that I had closed
 Mine eyes but for a moment, sirs, I saw
 As if across a world-without-end tomb,
 A tiny jewelled glow of crimson panes
 Darkening and brightening with the West.

And then,
Then I saw something more—Queen Mary's vault,
And—it was open ! . . .

Then, I heard a voice,
A strange deep broken voice, whispering love
In soft French words, that clasped and clung like hands ;
And then—two shadows passed against the West,
Two blurs of black against that crimson stain,
Slowly, oh, very slowly, with bowed heads,
Leaning together, and vanished into the dark
Beyond the Catafalque.

Then—I heard him pray,
And knew him for the man that prayed to me,—
Pray as a man prays for his love's last breath !
And then, O sirs, it caught me by the throat,
And I, too, dropped upon my knees and prayed ;
For, like an answer to his prayer, there came
A moan of music, a mighty shuddering sound
From the great organ, a sound that rose and fell
Like seas in anger, very far away ;
And then a peal of thunder, and then it seemed,
As if the graves were giving up their dead,
A great cowed host of shadows rose and sang :—

' Dies iræ, dies illâ,
Solvat sæclum in favilla,
Teste David cum Sibylla.'

I heard her sad, sad, little, broken voice,
Out in the darkness. ' Ay, and David, too,
His blood is on the floors of Holyrood,
To speak for me.' Then that great ocean-sound
Swelled to a thunder again, and heaven and earth
Shrivelled away ; and in that huge slow hymn
Chariots were driven forth in flaming rows,
And terrible trumpets blown from deep to deep.

And then, ah then, the heart of heaven was hushed,
And—in the hush—it seemed an angel wept,
Another Mary wept, and gathering up
All our poor wounded, weary, way-worn world,

Even as a mother gathers up her babe,
Soothed it against her breast, and rained her tears
On the pierced feet of God, and melted Him
To pity, and over His feet poured her deep hair.

The music died away. The shadows knelt.
And then—I heard a rustling nigh the tomb,
And heard—and heard—or dreamed I heard—farewells,
Farewells for everlasting, deep farewells ;
Bitter as blood, darker than any death.
And, at the last, as in a kiss, one word,
One whispering edge of sweetness, like a sword
For sharpness, drawn along a soft white throat ;
And, for its terrible longing, like a sigh
Across great waters, very far away,—
Sweetheart !

And then, like doors, like world-without-end doors
That shut for everlasting, came a clang,
And ringing, echoing, through the echo of it,
One terrible cry that plucked my heart-strings out,
Mary ! And on the closed and silent tomb,
Where there were two, one shuddering shadow lay,
And then—I, too,—reeled, swooned, and knew no more.

Sirs, when I woke, there was a broad bright shaft
Of moonlight, slanting through an eastern pane
Full on her tomb and that black catafalque.
And on the tomb there lay—my bunch of keys !
I struggled to my feet,
Ashamed of my wild fancies, like a man
Awaking from a drunken dream. And yet,
When I picked up the keys, although that storm
Of terror had all blown by and left me calm,
I lifted up mine eyes to see the scroll
Round the rich crest of that dark canopy,
IN MY DEFENCE, GOD ME DEFEND. The moon
Struck full upon it ; and, as I turned and went,
God help me, sirs, though I were loyal enough
To good Queen Bess, I could not help but say,
Amen !

And yet, methought it was not I that spake,
 But some deep soul that used me for a mask,
 A soul that rose up in this hollow shell
 Like dark sea-tides flooding an empty cave.
 I could not help but say with my poor lips,
Amen ! Amen !

Sirs, 'tis a terrible thing
 To move in great events. Since that strange night
 I have not been as other men. The tides
 Would rise in this dark cave"—he tapped his skull—
 "Deep tides, I know not whence ; and when they rose
 My friends looked strangely upon me and stood aloof.
 And once, my uncle said to me—indeed,
 It troubled me strangely,—' Timothy,' he said,
 ' Thou art translated ! I could well believe
 Thou art two men, whereof the one's a fool,
 The other a prophet. Or else, beneath thy skin
 There lurks a changeling ! What hath come to thee ? '
 And then, sirs, then—well I remember it !
 'Twas on a summer eve, and we walked home
 Between high ghostly hedges white with may—
 And uncle Robin, in his holy-day suit
 Of Reading Tawny, felt his old heart swell
 With pride in his great memories. He began
 Chanting the pedlar's tune, keeping the time
 Thus, jingle, jingle, slowly, with his keys :—

I.

Douglas in the moonless night
 —*Muffled oars on blue Loch Leven*—
 Took her hand, a flake of white
 —*Beauty slides the bolts of Heaven* !—
 Little white hand, like a flake of snow,
 When they saw it, his Highland crew
 Swung together, and murmured low,
 Douglas, wilt *thou* die, then, too ?
 And the pine-trees whispered, weeping,
Douglas, Douglas, tender and true !

‘ Little white hand like a tender moon-beam, soon shall
 you set the broadswords leaping !
 It is the Queen ! the Queen ! ’ they whispered, watch-
 ing her soar to the saddle anew :
 ‘ There will be trumpets blown in the mountains, a mist of
 blood on the heather, and weeping,
 Weeping, weeping, and thou, too, dead for her, Douglas,
 Douglas, tender and true ? ’

II.

Carry the queenly lass along !
 —*Cold she lies, cold and dead,—*
 She whose laughter was a song,
 —*Lapped around with sheets of lead !—*
 She whose blood was wine of the South,
 —*Light her down to a couch of clay—*
 And a royal rose her mouth,
 And her body made of may !
 —*Lift your torches weeping, weeping,*
Light her down to a couch of clay.

They should have left her in her vineyards, left her heart
 to her land’s own keeping,
 Left her white breast room to breathe, and left her
 light foot free to dance !
 Hush ! Between the solemn pine-woods, carry the lovely
 lady sleeping.
 Out of the cold grey Northern mists, with banner and
 scutcheon, plume and lance,
 Carry her southward, palled in purple, weeping, weeping,
 weeping, weeping,—

*O, ma patrie,
 La plus chérie,
 Adieu, plaisant pays de France.*

Well, sirs, that dark tide rose within my brain !
 I snatched his keys and flung them over the hedge,
 Then flung myself down on a bank of ferns
 And wept and wept and wept.

It puzzled him.

Perchance he feared my mind was going and yet,
 O, sirs, if you consider it rightly now,
 With all those ages knocking at his doors,
 With all that custom clamouring for his care,
 Is it so strange a grave-digger should weep ?
 Well—he was kind enough and heaped my plate
 That night at supper.
 But I could never dig my graves at ease
 In Peterborough Churchyard. So I came
 To London—to St Mary Magdalen's.
 And thus, I chanced to drink my ale one night
 Here in the Mermaid Inn. 'Twas All Souls' Eve,
 And, on that bench, where master Ford now sits
 Was master Shakespeare. Well, the lights burned low,
 And just like master Ford to-night he leaned
 Suddenly forward. ' Timothy,' he said,
 ' That's a most marvellous ruby !'

My blood froze !

I stretched my hand out bare as it was born ;
 And he said nothing, only looked at me.
 Then, seeing my pipe was empty, he bade me fill,
 And lit it for me.

Peach, the astrologer,
 Was living then ; and that same night I went
 And told him all my trouble about this ring.
 He took my hand in his, and held it—thus—
 Then looked into my face and said this rhyme :—

*The ruby ring, that only three
 While Time and Tide go by, shall see,
 Weds your hand to history.*

*Honour and pride the first shall lend ;
 The second shall give you gold to spend ;
 The third—shall warn you of your end.*

Peach was a rogue, some say, and yet he spake
 Most truly about the first," the sexton mused,
 " For master Shakespeare, though they say, in youth,
 Outside the theatres, he would hold your horse

For pence, prospered at last, bought a fine house
 In Stratford, lived there like a squire, they say.
 And here, here he would sit, for all the world
 As he were but a poet ! God bless us all,
 And then—to think !—he rose to be a squire !
 A deep one, masters ! Well, he lit my pipe ! ”

“ Why did they bury such a queen by night ? ”
 Said Ford. “ Kings might have wept for her. Did Death
 Play epicure and glutton that so few
 Were bidden to such a feast ? Once on a time
 I could have wept, myself, to hear a tale
 Of beauty buried in the dark. And hers
 Was loveliness, far, far beyond the common !
 Such beauty should be marble to the touch
 Of time, and clad in purple to amaze
 The moth. But she was kind and soft and fair,
 A woman, and so she died. But, why the dark ? ”

“ Sir, they gave out the coffin was too heavy
 For gentlemen to bear ! ”—“ For kings to bear ? ”
 Ford flashed at him. The sexton shook his head,—
 “ Nay ! Gentlemen to bear ! But—the true cause—
 Ah, sir, ’tis unbelievable, even to me,
 A sexton, for a queen so fair of face !
 And all her beds, even as the pedlar said,
 Breathing Arabia, sirs, her walls all hung
 With woven purple wonders and great tales
 Of amorous gods, and mighty mirrors, too,
 Imaging her own softness, night and dawn,
 When through her sumptuous hair she drew the combs ;
 And like one great white rose-leaf half her breast
 Shone through it, firm as ivory.”

“ Ay,” said Lodge,
 Murmuring his own rich music under breath,
*“ About her neck did all the graces throng,
 And lay such baits as did entangle death.”*

“ Well, sir, the weather being hot, they feared
 She would not hold the burying ! ” . . .

“ In some sort,”

Ford answered slowly, “ if your tale be true,
She did not hold it. Many a knightly crest
Will bend yet over the ghost of that small hand.”

There was a hush, broken by Ben at last,
Who turned to Ford—“ How now, my golden lad ?
The astrologer’s dead hand is on thy purse ! ”

Ford laughed, grimly, and flung an angel down.
“ Well, cause or consequence, rhyme or no rhyme,
There is thy gold. I will not break the spell,
Or thou mayst live to bury us one and all ! ”

“ And, if I live so long,” the old man replied,
Lighting his lanthorn, “ you may trust me, sirs,
Mine Inn is quiet, and I can find you beds
Where Queens might sleep all night and never move.
Good-night, sirs, and God bless you, one and all.”

He shouldered pick and spade. I opened the door.
The snow blew in, and, as he shuffled out,
There, in the strait dark passage, I could swear
I saw a spark of red upon his hand,
Like a great smouldering ruby.

I gasped. He stopped.

He peered at me.

“ Twice in a night,” he said.

“ Nothing,” I answered, “ only the lanthorn-light.”
He shook his head. “ I’ll tell you something more !
There’s nothing, nothing now in life or death
That frightens me. Ah, things used to frighten me !
But never now ! I thought I had ten years ;
But if the warning comes and says ‘ *Thou fool,*
This night ! ’ Why, then, I’m ready ! ”

I watched him go,
With glimmering lanthorn up the narrow street,
Like one that walked upon the clouds, through snow
That seemed to mix the City with the skies.

On Christmas Eve we heard that he was dead.

RALEIGH.

(FROM TALES OF THE MERMAID TAVERN.)

BEN was our only guest that day. His tribe
Had flown to their new shrine—the Apollo Room,
To which, though they enscrolled his golden verse
Above their doors like a great-fruited vine,
Ben still preferred our *Mermaid*, and to smoke
Alone in his old nook ; perhaps to hear
The voices of the dead,
The voices of his old companions,
Hovering near him,—Will and Kit and Rob.

“ Our Ocean-shepherd from the main-deep sea,
Raleigh,” he muttered, as I brimmed his cup,
“ Last of the men that broke the fleets of Spain.
'Twas not enough to cage him, sixteen years,
Rotting his heart out in the Bloody Tower,
But they must fling him forth in his old age
To hunt for El Dorado. Then, mine host,
Because his poor old ship *The Destiny*
Smashes the Spaniard, but comes tottering home
Without the Spanish gold, our gracious king,
To please a catamite,
Sends the old lion back to the Tower again.
The friends of Spain will send him to the block
This time. That male Salome, Buckingham,
Is dancing for his head. Raleigh is doomed.”

A shadow stood in the doorway. We looked up ;
And there, but oh, how changed, how worn and grey,

Sir Walter Raleigh, like a hunted thing
Stared at us.

“ Ben,” he said, and glanced behind him.
Ben took a step towards him.

“ Tell me quickly,”
Whispered the old man in a husky voice,
Half timorous and half cunning, so unlike
His old heroic self that one might weep
To hear it, “ Ben, I have given them all the slip !
I may be followed ! Can you hide me here
Till it grows dark ? ”
Ben drew him quickly in, and motioned me
To lock the door. “ Till it grows dark,” he cried,
“ My God, that you should ask it ! ”

“ Do not think,
Do not believe that I am quite disgraced,”
The old man faltered, “ for they’ll say it, Ben ;
And when my boy grows up, they’ll tell him, too,
His father was a coward. I do cling
To life, for many reasons, not from fear
Of death. No, Ben, I can disdain that still ;
But—there’s my boy ! ”

Then all his face went blind.
He dropped upon Ben’s shoulder and sobbed outright,
“ They are trying to break my pride, to break my pride ! ”
The window darkened, and I saw a face
Blurring the panes. Ben gripped the old man’s arm
And led him gently to a room within,
Out of the way of guests.

“ Your pride,” he said,
“ That is the pride of England ! ”

At that name
England !—

As at a signal-gun, heard in the night
Far out at sea, the weather-and-world-worn man,
That once was Raleigh, lifted up his head.
Old age and weakness, weariness and fear,
Fell from him like a cloak. He stood erect.
His eager eyes, full of wide sea-washed dawns,
Burned for a moment with immortal youth
While tears blurred mine to see him.

“ You do think,
That England will remember ? You do think it ? ”
He asked with a great light upon his face.
Ben bowed his head in silence.

“ I have wronged
My cause by this,” said Raleigh. “ Well they know it
Who left this way for me. I have flung myself
Like a blind moth into this deadly light
Of freedom. Now, at the eleventh hour,
Is it too late ? I might return and . . . ”

“ No !

Not now ! ” Ben interrupted. “ I’d have said
Laugh at the headsman, sixteen years ago,
When England was awake. She will awake
Again. But now, while our most gracious king,
Who hates tobacco, dedicates his prayers
To Buckingham, that male Salome . . . no !
This is no land for men that, under God,
Shattered the Fleet Invincible.”

A knock
Startled us, at the outer door. “ My friend
Stukeley,” said Raleigh, “ if I know his hand.
He has a ketch will carry me to France,
Waiting at Tilbury.”

I let him in,—

A lean and stealthy fellow, Sir Lewis Stukeley.
I liked him little. He thought much of his health,
More of his money-bags, and most of all
On how to run with all men all at once
For his own profit. At the *Mermaid Inn*
Men disagreed in friendship and in truth ;
But he agreed with all men, and his life
Was one soft quag of falsehood. Fugitives
Must use false keys, I thought ; and there was hope
For Raleigh if such a man would walk one mile
To serve him now. Yet my throat moved to see him
Usurping, with one hand on Raleigh’s arm,
A kind of ownership. *Lend me ten pounds,*
Were the first words he breathed in the old man’s ear,
And Raleigh slipped his purse into his hand.

Just over Bread Street hung the bruised white moon
When they crept out.

Sir Lewis Stukeley's watch-dog,
A derelict bo'sun with a mulberry face,
Met them outside. "The coast quite clear, eh, Hart?"
Said Stukeley. "Ah, that's good. Lead on, then, quick."
And there, framed in the cruddle of moonlit clouds
That ended the steep street, dark on its light,
And standing on those glistening cobble-stones
Just where they turned to silver, Raleigh looked back
Before he turned the corner. He stood there,
A figure like foot-feathered Mercury,
Tall, straight and splendid, waving his plumed hat
To Ben, and taking his last look, I felt,
Upon our Mermaid Tavern. As he paused,
His long fantastic shadow swayed and swept
Against our feet. Then, like a shadow, he passed.

"It is not right," said Ben, "it is not right.
Why did they give the old man so much grace?
Witness and evidence are what they lack.
Would you trust Stukeley—not to draw him out?
Raleigh was always rash. A phrase or two
Will turn their murderous axe into a sword
Of righteousness. . . .

Why, come to think of it,
Blackfriar's wharf, last night I landed there,
And—no, by God!—Raleigh is not himself,
The tide will never serve beyond Gravesend.
It is a trap! Come on! We'll follow them!
Quick! To the river-side! . . ."

We reached the wharf
Only to see their wherry, a small black cloud
Dwindling far down that running silver road.
Ben touched my arm.
"Look there," he said, pointing up-stream.

The moon
Glanced on a cluster of pikes, like silver thorns,
Three hundred yards away, a little troop
Of weaponed men, embarking hurriedly.

Their great black wherry clumsily swung about,
Then, with twelve oars for legs, came striding down,
An armoured beetle on the glittering trail
Of some small victim.

Just below our wharf

A little dinghy waddled.

Ben cut the painter, and without one word
Drew her up crackling thro' the lapping water,
Motioned me to the tiller, thrust her off,
And, pulling with one oar, backing with the other,
Swirled her round and down, hard on the track
Of Raleigh.

Ben was an old man now, but tough,
Oh, tough as a buccaneer. We distanced them.
His oar-blades drove the silver boiling back.
By Broken Wharf the beetle was a speck.
It dwindled by Queen Hythe and the Three Cranes.
By Bellyn's Gate we had left it out of sight.
By Custom House and Galley Keye we shot
Through silver all the way, without one glimpse
Of Raleigh. Then a dreadful shadow fell,
And over us the Tower of London rose
Like ebony ; and on the glittering reach
Beyond it, I could see the small black cloud
That carried the great old seaman slowly down
Between the dark shores whence in happier years
The throng had cheered his turreted galleons out,
And watched his proud sails filling for Cathay.
There, as through lead, we dragged by Traitor's Gate,
There, in the darkness, under the Bloody Tower,
There, on the very verge of victory,
Ben gasped and dropped his oars.
"Take one and row," he said, "my arms are numbed.
We'll overtake him yet!" I clambered past him,
And took the bow oar.

Once, as the pace flagged,
Over his shoulder he turned his great scarred face
And snarled, with a trickle of blood on his coarse lips,
"Hard!" . . .

And blood and fire ran through my veins again,
For half a minute more.

Yet we fell back.
Our course was crooked now. And soon I saw
A grim black speck begin to grow behind us,
Grow like the threat of death upon old age.
Then, thickening, blackening, sharpening, foaming, swept
Up the bright line of bubbles in our wake,
That armoured wherry, with its long twelve oars,
All well together now.

“Too late,” gasped Ben.
His ash-grey face uplifted to the moon,
One quivering hand upon the thwart behind him,
A moment. Then he bowed over his knees
Coughing. “But we’ll delay them. We’ll be drunk,
And hold the catch-polls up.”

We drifted down
Before them, broadside on. They sheered aside.
Then, feigning a clumsy stroke, Ben drove our craft
As they drew level, right in among their blades.
There was a shout, an oath. They thrust us off,
And then we swung our nose against their bows
And pulled them round with every well-meant stroke.
A full half-minute, ere they won quite free.
Cursing us for a pair of drunken fools.

We drifted down behind them.

“There’s no doubt,”
Said Ben, “the headsman waits behind all this
For Raleigh. This is a play to cheat the soul
Of England, teach the people to applaud
The red fifth act.”

Without another word we drifted down,
For centuries it seemed, until we came
To Greenwich.
Then up the long white burnished reach there crept,
Like little sooty clouds, the two black boats
To meet us.

“He is in the trap,” said Ben,
“And does not know it yet. See where he sits
By Stukeley as by a friend.”

Long after this,
We heard how Raleigh, simply as a child,

Seeing the tide would never serve him now,
 And they must turn, had taken from his neck
 Some trinkets that he wore. "Keep them," he said
 To Stukeley, "in remembrance of this night."
 He had no doubts of Stukeley when he saw
 The wherry close beside them. He but wrapped
 His cloak a little closer round his face.

Our boat rocked in their wash when Stukeley dropped
 The mask. We saw him give the sign, and heard
 His high-pitched quavering voice—*In the King's name!*

Raleigh rose to his feet. "I am under arrest?"
 He said, like a dazed man.

And Stukeley laughed.

Then as he bore himself to the grim end,
 All doubt being over, the old sea-king stood
 Among those glittering points, a king indeed.
 The black boats rocked. We heard his level voice,
Sir Lewis, these actions never will turn out
To your good credit. Across the moonlit Thames
 It rang contemptuously, cold as cold steel,
 And passionless as the judgment that ends all.

Some three months later, Raleigh's widow came
 To lodge a se'nnight at the Mermaid Inn.

His house in Bread Street was no more her own,
 But in the hands of Stukeley, who had reaped
 A pretty harvest . . .

She kept close to her room, and that same night,
 Being ill and with some fever, sent her maid
 To fetch the apothecary from Friday Street,
 Old Galen, as the Mermaid christened him.
 At that same moment, as the maid went out,
 Stukeley came in. He met her at the door;
 And, chucking her under the chin, gave her a letter,
 "Take this up to your mistress. It concerns
 Her property," he said; "say that I wait,
 And would be glad to speak with her."

The wench
Looked pertly into his face and tripped upstairs.
I scarce could trust my hands.

"Sir Lewis," I said,
"This is no time to trouble her. She is ill."
"Let her decide," he answered, with a sneer.
Before I found another word to say
The maid tripped down again. I scarce believed
My senses when she beckoned him up the stair.
Shaking from head to foot, I blocked the way.
"Property!" Could the crux of mine and thine
Bring widow and murderer into one small room?
"Sir Lewis," I said, "she is ill. It is not right!
She never would consent."

He sneered again,
"You are her doctor? Out of the way, old fool!
She has decided!"

"Go," I said to the maid,
"Fetch the apothecary. Let it rest
With him."

She tossed her head. Her quick eyes glanced,
Showing the white, like the eyes of a vicious mare.
She laughed at Stukeley, loitered, then—obeyed.

And so we waited, till the wench returned,
With Galen at her heels. His wholesome face,
Russet and wrinkled like an apple, peered
Shrewdly at Stukeley, twinkled once at me
And passed in silence, leaving a whiff of herbs
Behind him on the stair.

Five minutes later
To my amazement, that same wholesome face
Leaned from the lighted door above, and called
"Sir Lewis Stukeley!"

Sir Judas hastened up.
The apothecary followed him within.
The door shut, I was left there in the dark
Bewildered; for my heart was hot with thoughts
Of those last months. Our Summer's Nightingale,
Our Ocean-Shepherd from the Main-deep Sea,
The Founder of our Mermaid Fellowship,

Was this his guerdon—at the Mermaid Inn ?
 Was this that maid-of-honour whose romance
 With Raleigh, once, had been a kingdom's talk ?
 Could Bess Throckmorton slight his memory thus ?
 " It is not right," I said, " it is not right.
 She wrongs him deeply."

I leaned against the porch
 Staring into the night. A ghostly ray
 Above me, from her window, bridged the street
 And rested on the goldsmith's painted sign
 Opposite.

I could hear the muffled voice
 Of Stukeley overhead, persuasive, bland ;
 And then, her own, cooing, soft as a dove
 Calling its mate from Eden cedar-boughs,
 Flowed on and on ; and then—all my flesh crept
 At something worse than either, a long space
 Of silence that stretched threatening and cold,
 Cold as a dagger-point pricking the skin
 Over my heart.

Then came a stifled cry,
 A crashing door, a footstep on the stair,
 Blundering like a drunkard's heavily down ;
 And with his gasping face one tragic mask
 Of horror,—may God help me to forget,
 Some day, the frozen awful eyes of one
 Who, fearing neither hell nor heaven, has met
 That ultimate weapon of the gods, the face
 And serpent tresses that turn flesh to stone—
 Stukeley stumbled, groping his way out,
 Blindly, past me, into the sheltering night.

It was the last night of another year
 Before I understood what punishment
 Had overtaken Stukeley.

Ben and Brome—
 Ben's ancient servant, but turned poet now—
 Sat by the fire with the old apothecary
 To see the New Year in.

The starry night
 Had drawn me to the door. Could it be true

That our poor earth no longer was the hub
 Of those white wheeling orbs ? I scarce believed
 The strange new dreams ; but I had seen the veils
 Rent from vast oceans and huge continents,
 Till what was once our comfortable fire,
 Our cosy tavern, and our earthly home
 With heaven beyond the next turn in the road,
 All that resplendent fabric of our world,
 Shrank to a glow-worm, lighting up one leaf
 In one small forest, in one little land,
 Among those wild infinitudes of God.

A tattered wastrel wandered down the street,
 Clad in a seaman's jersey, staring hard
 At every sign. Beneath our own, the light
 Fell on his red carbuncled face, I knew him,—
 The bo'sun, Hart.

He pointed to our sign
 And leered at me. "That's her," he said, "no doubt,
 The sea-witch with the shiny mackerel tail
 Swishing in wine. That's what Sir Lewis meant.
 He called it blood. Blood is his craze, you see.
 This is the Mermaid Tavern, sir, no doubt ?"
 I nodded. "Ah, I thought as much," he said.
 "Well—happen this may be worth a cup of ale."
 He thrust his hand under his jersey and lugged
 A greasy letter out. It was inscribed
The apothecary at the Mermaid Tavern.

I led him in. "I knew it, sir," he said,
 While Galen broke the seal. "Soon as I saw
 That sweet young naked wench curling her tail
 In those red waves.—The old man called it blood—
 Blood is his craze, you see.—But you can tell
 'Tis wine, sir, by the foam. Malmsey, no doubt.
 And that sweet wench to make you smack your lips
 Like oysters, with her slippery tail and all !
 Why, sir, no doubt, this was the Mermaid Inn."

"But this," said Galen, lifting his grave face
 To Ben, "this letter is from all that's left
 Of Stukeley. The good host, there, thinks I wronged

Your Ocean-Shepherd's memory. From this letter,
 I think I helped to avenge him. Do not wrong
 His widow, even in thought. She loved him dearly.
 You know she keeps his poor grey severed head
 Embalmed ; and so will keep it till she dies ;
 Weeps over it alone. I have heard such things
 In wild Italian tales. But *this* was true.
 Had I refused to let her speak with Stukeley
 I feared she would go mad. This letter proves
 That I—and she perhaps—were instruments
 Of some more terrible chirurgery
 Than either knew.

“ Ah, when I saw your sign,”

The bo'sun interjected, “ I'd no doubt
 That letter was well worth a cup of ale.”

“ Go—paint your bows with hell-fire somewhere else,
 Not at this inn,” said Ben, tossing the rogue
 A good French crown. “ Pickle yourself in hell.”
 And Hart lurched out into the night again,
 Muttering, “ Thank you, sirs. 'Twas worth all that.
 No doubt at all.”

“ There are some men,” said Galen,
 Spreading the letter out on his plump knees,
 “ Will heap up wrong on wrong ; and, at the last,
 Wonder because the world will not forget
 Just when it suits them, cancel all they owe,
 And, like a mother, hold its arms out wide
 At their first cry. And, sirs, I do believe
 That Stukeley, on that night, had some such wish
 To reconcile himself. What else had passed
 Between the widow and himself I know not ;
 But she had lured him on until he thought
 That words and smiles, perhaps a tear or two,
 Might make the widow take the murderer's hand
 In friendship, since it might advantage both.
 Indeed, he came prepared for even more.
 Villains are always fools. A wicked act,
 What is it but a false move in the game,
 A blind man's blunder, a deaf man's reply,
 The wrong drug taken in the dead of night ?
 I always pity villains.

I mistook

The avenger for the victim. There she lay
Panting, that night, her eyes like summer stars.
Her pale gold hair upon the pillows tossed
Dishevelled, while the fever in her face
Brought back the lost wild roses of her youth
For half an hour. Against a breast as pure
And smooth as any maid's her soft arms pressed
A bundle wrapped in a white embroidered cloth.
She crooned over it as a mother croons
Over her suckling child. I stood beside her.
—That was her wish, and mine, while Stukeley stayed.—
And, over against me, on the other side,
Stood Stukeley, gnawing his nether lip to find
She could not, or she would not, speak one word
In answer to his letter.

“Lady Raleigh,
You wrong me, and you wrong yourself,” he cried,
“To play like a green girl when great affairs
Are laid before you. Let me speak with you,
Alone.”

“But I am all alone,” she said,
“Far more alone than I have ever been
In all my life before. This is my doctor.
He must not leave me.”

Then she lured him on,
Played on his brain as a musician plays
Upon the lute.

“Forgive me, dear Sir Lewis,
If I am grown too gay for widowhood.
But I have pondered for a long, long time
On all these matters. I know the world was right,
The King was right, and Buckingham was right ;
And Spain was right, Sir Lewis. Yes, and you,
You, too, were right ; and my poor husband wrong.
You see I knew his mind so very well.
I knew his every gesture, every smile.
I lived with him. I think I died with him.

It is a strange thing, marriage. For my soul
(As if myself were present in this flesh)

Beside him, slept in his grey prison-cell
 On that last dreadful dawn. I heard the throng
 Murmuring round the scaffold, far away ;
 And, with the smell of sawdust in my nostrils,
 I woke bewildered as himself, to see
 That tall, black-cassocked figure by his bed.
 I heard the words that made him understand :
The Body of our Lord . . . take and eat this !
 I rolled the small sour flakes beneath my tongue
 With him. I caught, with him, the gleam of tears,
 Far off, on some strange face of sickly dread.
The Blood . . . and the cold cup was in my hand,
 Cold as an axe-heft washed with waterish red.
 I heard his last poor cry to wife and child.—
 Could any that heard forget it ?—*My true God*
Hold you both in His arms, both in His arms !
 And then—that last poor wish, a thing to raise
 A smile in some. I have smiled at it myself
 A thousand times.

Give me my pipe, he said,
My old Winchester clay, with the long stem,
And half an hour alone. The crowd can wait.
They have not waited half so long as I.
 And then, oh, then, I know what soft blue clouds,
 What wavering rings, fragrant ascending wreaths
 Melted his prison-walls to a summer haze,
 Through which I think he saw the little port
 Of Budleigh Salterton, like a sea-bird's nest
 Among the Devon cliffs . . . the tarry quay
 Where in his boyhood he had flung a line
 For bass or whiting-pollock. I remembered
 (Had he not told me, on some summer night
 His arm about my neck, kissing my hair)
 He used to sit there, gazing out to sea ;
 Fish, and for what ? Not all for what he caught
 And handled ; but for rainbow-coloured things,
 The water-drops that jewelled his thin line,
 Flotsam and jetsam of the sunset clouds,
 While the green water gurgling through the piles,
 Heaving and sinking, helped him to believe
 The fast-bound quay a galleon plunging out

Superbly for Cathay. There would he sit
Listening, a radiant boy, child of the sea,
Listening to some old seaman's glowing tales,
His grey eyes rich with pictures. . . .

Then he saw,

And I with him, that gathering in the West,
To break the Fleet Invincible. Oh, I heard
The trumpets and the neighings and the drums,
The sound of guns at sea, like a long soft fall
Of white chalk cliffs, crumbling slowly away,
I watched the beacons on a hundred hills.
I drank that wine of battle from *his* cup,
And gloried in it, lying against his heart.
I sailed with him and saw the unknown worlds.
The slender ivory towers of old Cathay
Rose for us over lilac-coloured seas
That crumpled a sky-blue foam on long shores
Of shining sand, shores of so clear a glass
They drew the sunset-clouds into their bosom
And hung that City of Vision in mid air
Girdling it round, as with a moat of sky.
Hopelessly beautiful. Oh, yet I heard—
Heard from his blazoned poops the trumpeters
Blowing proud calls, while overhead the flag
Of England floated from white towers of sail . . .
And yet, and yet I knew that he was wrong.
And soon he knew it, too.

I saw the cloud
Of doubt assail him, in the Bloody Tower,
When, being withheld from sailing the high seas
For sixteen years, he spread a prouder sail,
Took up his pen and, walled about with stone,
Began to write—his *History of the World*.
And emperors came, like Lazarus from the grave,
To wear his purple. And the night disgorged
Its empires, till, oh, like the swirl of dust
Around their marching legions, that dim cloud
Of doubt closed round him. Was there any man
So sure of heart and brain as to record
The simple truth of things himself had seen?
Then who could plumb that night? The work broke off!

He knew that he was wrong. I knew it, too !
 Once more that stately structure of his dreams
 Melted like mist. His eagles perished like clouds.
 Death wound a thin horn through the centuries.
 The grave resumed his forlorn emperors.
 His empires crumbled back to a little ash
 Knocked from his pipe . . .
 He dropped his pen in homage to the truth.
 The truth ? *O eloquent, just, and mighty Death !*

Then, when he forged, out of one golden thought,
 A key to open his prison ; when the King
 Released him for a tale of faërie gold
 Under the tropic palms ; when those grey walls
 Melted before his passion ; do you think
 The gold that lured the King was quite the same
 As that which Raleigh saw ? You know the song :

‘ Say to the King,’ quoth Raleigh,
 ‘ I have a tale to tell him :
 Wealth beyond derision,
 Veils to lift from the sky,
 Seas to sail for England,
 And a little dream to sell him,
 Gold, the gold of a vision
 That angels cannot buy.’

Ah, no ! For all the beauty and the pride,
 Raleigh was wrong ; but not so wrong, I think,
 As those for whom his kingdoms oversea
 Meant only glittering dust. The fight he waged
 Was not with them. They never worsted him.
 It was the *Destiny* that brought him home
 Without the Spanish gold. . . . Oh, he was wrong,
 But such a wrong in Gloriana’s day,
 Was more than right, was immortality.
 He had just half an hour to put all this
 Into his pipe and smoke it . . .

 The red fire,
 The red heroic fire that filled his veins
 When the proud flag of England floated out
 Its challenge to the world—all gone to ash ?

What ? Was the great red wine that Drake had quaffed
Vinegar ? He must fawn, haul down his flag,
And count all nations nobler than his own ;
Tear out the lions from the painted shields
That hung his poop, for fear that he offend
The pride of Spain ? Treason to sack the ships
Of Spain ? The wounds of slaughtered Englishmen
Cried out—*there is no law beyond the line !*
Treason to sweep the seas with Francis Drake ?
Treason to fight for England ?

If it were so,

The times had changed and quickly. He had been
A school-boy in the morning of the world,
Playing with wooden swords and winning crowns
Of tinsel ; but his comrades had outgrown
Their morning-game, and gathered round to mock
His battles in the sunset. Yet he knew
That all his life had passed in that brief day ;
And he was old, too old to understand
The smile upon the face of Buckingham,
The smile on Cobham's face at that great word
England !

He knew the solid earth was changed
To something less than dust among the stars . . .
And oh, be sure he knew that he was wrong,
That gleams would come—
Gleams of a happier world for younger men,
That Commonwealth, far off. This was a time
Of sadder things, destruction of the old
Before the new was born. At least he knew
It was his own way that had brought the world
Thus far, England thus far ! How could he change,
He who loved England as a man might love
His mistress, change from year to fickle year ?
For the new years would change, even as the old.
No—he was wedded to that old first love,
Crude flesh and blood, and coarse as meat and drink,
The woman—England ; no fine angel-isle,
Ruled by that male Salome—Buckingham !
Better the axe than to live on and wage
These new and silent and more deadly wars

That play at friendship with our enemies.
Such times are evil. Not of their own desire
They lead to good, blind agents of that Hand
Which now had hewed him down, down to his knees,
But in a prouder battle than men knew.

His pipe was out. The guard was at the door.
Raleigh was not a god. But when he climbed
The scaffold, I believe he looked a man.
And when the axe fell, I believe that God
Set on his shoulders that immortal head
Which he desired on earth.

Raleigh was wrong !

But when that axe fell, not one shout was raised.
That mighty throng around that crimson block
Stood silent—like the hushed black cloud that holds
The thunder. You might hear the headsman's breath.
Stillness like that is dangerous, being charged
Sometimes with thought, Sir Lewis ! England sleeps !
What if, one day, the Stewart should be called
To know that England wakes ? What if a shout
Should thunder-strike Whitehall, and the dogs lift
Their heads along the fringes of the crowd
To catch a certain savour that I know,
The smell of blood and sawdust ? . . .

Ah, Sir Lewis,

'Tis hard to find one little seed of right
Among so many wrongs. Raleigh was wrong,
And yet—it was because he loved his country,
Next to himself, Sir Lewis, by your leave,
His country butchered him. You did not know
That I was only third in his affections ?
The night I told him—we were parting then—
I had begged the last disposal of his body,
Did he not say with, oh, so gentle a smile,
Thou hadst not always the disposal of it
In life, dear Bess. 'Tis well it should be thine
In death ! ”—

“ The jest was bitter at such an hour,
And somewhat coarse in grain,” Stukeley replied.
“ Indeed I thought him kinder.”

“Kinder,” she said,
Laughing bitterly.

Stukeley looked at her.
She whispered something, and his lewd old eyes
Fastened upon her own. He knelt by her.
“Perhaps,” he said, “your woman’s wit has found
A better way to solve this bitter business.”
Her head moved on the pillow with little tossings.
He touched her hand. It leapt quickly away.
She hugged that strange white bundle to her breast
And writhed back, smiling at him, across the bed.
“Ah, Bess,” he whispered huskily, pressing his lips
To that warm hollow where her head had lain,
“There is one way to close the long dispute,
Keep the estates unbroken in your hands
And stop all slanderous tongues, one happy way.
We have some years to live ; and why alone ? ”

“Alone ? ” she sighed. “My husband thought of that.
He wrote a letter to me, long ago,
When he was first condemned. He said—he said—
Now let me think—what was it that he said ?—
I had it all by heart.—*Beseech you, Bess,
Hide not yourself for many days, he said.*”
“True wisdom that,” quoth Stukeley, “for the love
That seeks to chain the living to the dead
Is but self-love at best ! ”

“And yet,” she said,
“See how his poor heart’s torn between two cares,
Love of himself and care for me, as thus :
*Love God ! Begin to repose yourself on Him !
Therein you shall find true and lasting riches ;
But all the rest is nothing. When you have tired
Your thoughts on earthly things, when you have travelled
Through all the glittering pomps of this proud world,
You shall sit down by Sorrow in the end.
Begin betimes, and teach your little son
To serve and fear God also.
Then God will be a husband unto you,
And unto him a father ; nor can Death
Bereave you any more. When I am gone,
No doubt you shall be sought unto by many,*

*For the world thinks that I was very rich.
No greater misery can befall you, Bess,
Than to become a prey and, afterwards,
To be despised."*

"Human enough," said Stukeley,
"And yet—self-love, self-love!"

"Ah, no," quoth she,
"You have not heard the end: *God knows, I speak it
Not to dissuade you—not to dissuade you, mark—
From marriage. That will be the best for you,
Both in respect of God and of the world.*

Was that self-love, Sir Lewis? Ah, not all.

*And thus he ended: For his father's sake
That chose and loved you in his happiest times,
Remember your poor child! The Everlasting,
Infinite, Powerful, and Inscrutable God,
Keep you and yours, have mercy upon me,
And teach me to forgive my false accusers. . . .*

*Wrong, even in death, you see. Then—My true wife,
Farewell!*

*Bless my poor boy! Pray for me! My true God
Hold you both in His arms, both in His arms!*

I know that he was wrong. You did not know,
Sir Lewis, that he had left me a little child.
Come closer, you shall see its orphaned face.
The sad, sad relict of a man that loved
His country . . . all that's left to me. Come, look!"
She beckoned Stukeley nearer. He bent down
Curiously. Her feverish fingers drew
The white wrap from the bundle in her arms,
And, with a smile that would make angels weep,
She showed him, pressed against her naked breast,
Terrible as Medusa, the grey flesh
And shrivelled face, embalmed, the thing that dropped
Into the headsman's basket, months ago,—
The head of Raleigh.

Half her body lay
Bare, while she held that grey babe to her heart;
But Judas hid his face.

"Living," she said, "he was not always mine ;
But—dead—I shall not wean him. . . ."

Then I, too,
Covered my face . . . I cannot tell you more.
There was a dreadful silence in that room,
Silence that, as I know, shattered the brain
Of Stukeley. . . . When I dared to raise my head
Beneath that silent thunder of our God,
The man had gone. . . .

This is his letter, sirs,
Written from Lundy Island : *For God's love,
Tell them it is a cruel thing to say
That I drink blood. I have no secret sin.
A thousand pound is not so great a sum ;
And that was all they paid me, every penny.
Salt water, that is all the drink I taste
On this rough island. Somebody has taught
The sea-gulls how to wail around my hut
All night, like lost souls. And there is a face,
A dead man's face that laughs in every storm,
And sleeps in every pool along the coast.
I thought it was my own, once. But I know
These actions never, never, on God's earth,
Will turn out to their credit who believe
That I drink blood.*

He crumpled up the letter
And tossed it into the fire.

"Galen," said Ben,
"I think you are right—that one should pity villains."

The clock struck twelve. The bells began to peal.
We drank a cup of sack to the New Year.
"New songs for you, lad, all as fresh as may,"
Said Ben to Brome, "but I shall never live
To hear them."

All was not so well, indeed,
With Ben, as hitherto. Age had come upon him.
He dragged one foot as in paralysis.
The critics bayed against the old lion, now,
And called him arrogant. "My brain," he said,
"Is yet unhurt, although, set round with pain,

It cannot long hold out." He never stooped,
 Never once pandered to that vitiate hour.
 His coat was threadbare. Many a week of late
 We had missed his voice resounding in our inn.
 "The statues are defiled, the gods dethroned,
 The Ionian movement reigns, not the free soul.
 And, as for me," he said, "I have lived too long.
 Well—I can weave the old threnodies anew."
 Then, filling his cup, he murmured, under his breath,
 A new song, breaking on an ancient shore :—

I.

Marlowe is dead, and Greene is in his grave,
 And sweet Will Shakespeare long ago is gone !
 Our Ocean-Shepherd sleeps beneath the wave ;
 Robin is dead, and Marlowe in his grave.
 Why should I stay to chant an idle stave,
 And in my Mermaid Tavern drink alone ?
 For Kit is dead, and Greene is in his grave,
 And sweet Will Shakespeare long ago is gone.

II.

Where is the singer of the Faërie Queen ?
 Where are the lyric lips of Astrophel ?
 Long, long ago, their quiet graves were green ;
 Ay, and the grave, too, of their Faërie Queen !
 And yet their faces, hovering here unseen,
 Call me to taste their new-found œnometel ;
 To sup with him who sang the Faërie Queen ;
 To drink with him whose name was Astrophel.

III.

I drink to that great Inn beyond the grave !
 —If there be none, the gods have done us wrong,—
 Ere long I hope to chant a better stave
 In some great Mermaid Inn beyond the grave ;

And quaff the best of earth that heaven can save,
Red wine like blood, deep love of friends, and song.
I drink to that great Inn beyond the grave,
And hope to greet my golden lads ere long.

He raised his cup and drank in silence. Brome
Drank with him, too. The bells had ceased to peal.
Galen shook hands, and bade us all good-night.
Then Brome, a little wistfully, I thought,
Looked at his old-time master and prepared
To follow. "Good-night—Ben," he said, a pause
Before he spoke the name. "Good-night! Good-night!
My dear old Brome," said Ben.

And, at the door,
Brome whispered to me, "He is lonely now.
There are not many left of his old friends.
We all go out—like this—into the night.
But what a fleet of stars," he said, and shook
My hand, and smiled, and pointed to the sky.

And, when I looked into the room again,
The lights were very dim, and I believed
That Ben had fallen asleep. His great grey head
Was bowed across the table, on his arms.
Then, all at once, I knew that he was weeping,
And like a shadow I crept back again,
And stole into the night.

There as I stood
Under the painted sign, I could have vowed
That I, too, heard the voices of the dead,
The voices of his old companions,
Gathering round him in that lonely room;
Till all the timbers of the Mermaid Inn
Trembled above me with their ghostly song—

"Say to the King," quoth Raleigh,
"I have a tale to tell him,
Wealth beyond derision,
Veils to lift from the sky;

Seas to sail for England
 And a little dream to sell him,
 Gold, the gold of a vision,
 That angels cannot buy."

Fair thro' the walls of his dungeon,
 —What were the stones but a shadow?—
 Streamed the light of the rapture,
 The lure that he followed of old,
 The dream of his old companions,
 The vision of El Dorado,
 The fleet that they never could capture,
 The city of sunset gold.

Yet did they sail the seas
 And, dazed with exceeding wonder,
 Straight thro' the sunset-glory
 Plunge into the dawn :
 Leaving their home behind them,
 By a road of splendour and thunder,
 They came to their home in amazement
 Simply by sailing on.

THE ADMIRAL'S GHOST.

I TELL you a tale to-night
 Which a seaman told to me,
 With eyes that gleamed in the lanthorn light
 And a voice as low as the sea.

You could almost hear the stars
 Twinkling up in the sky,
 And the old wind woke and moaned in the spars,
 And the same old waves went by,

Singing the same old song
 As ages and ages ago,
 While he froze my blood in that deep-sea night
 With the things that he seemed to know.

A bare foot pattered on deck ;
 Ropes creaked ; then—all grew still,
 And he pointed his finger straight in my face
 And growled, as a sea-dog will.

“ Do 'ee know who Nelson was ?
 That pore little shrivelled form
 With the patch on his eye and the pinned-up sleeve
 And a soul like a North Sea storm ?

“ Ask of the Devonshire men !
 They know, and they'll tell you true ;
 He wasn't the pore little chawed-up chap
 That Hardy thought he knew.

“ He wasn’t the man you think !
His patch was a dern disguise !
For he knew that they’d find him out, d’you see,
If they looked him in both his eyes.

“ He was twice as big as he seemed ;
But his clothes were cunningly made.
He’d both of his hairy arms all right.
The sleeve was a trick of the trade.

“ You’ve heard of sperrits, no doubt ;
Well, there’s more in the matter than that !
But he wasn’t the patch, and he *wasn’t* the sleeve,
And he *wasn’t* the laced cocked-hat.

“ *Nelson was just—a Ghost !*
You may laugh ! But the Devonshire men
They knew that he’d come when England called,
And they know that he’ll come again.

“ I’ll tell you the way it was
(For none of the landsmen know),
And to tell it you right, you must go a-starn
Two hundred years or so.

“ The waves were lapping and slapping
The same as they are to-day ;
And Drake lay dying aboard his ship
In Nombre Dios Bay.

“ The scent of the foreign flowers
Came floating all around ;
‘ But I’d give my soul for the smell o’ the pitch,’
Says he, ‘ in Plymouth Sound.

“ ‘ What shall I do,’ he says,
‘ When the guns begin to roar,
An’ England wants me, and me not there
To shatter her foes once more ? ’

" (You've heard what he said, maybe,
But I'll mark you the p'int's again ;
For I want you to box your compass right
And get my story plain.)

" ' You must take my drum,' he says,
' To the old sea-wall at home ;
And if ever you strike that drum,' he says,
' Why, strike me blind, I'll come !

" ' If England needs me, dead
Or living, I'll rise that day !
I'll rise from the darkness under the sea
Ten thousand miles away.'

" That's what he said ; and he died ;
An' his pirates, listenin' roun',
With their crimson doublets and jewelled swords
That flashed as the sun went down,

" They sewed him up in his shroud
With a round-shot top and toe,
To sink him under the salt sharp sea
Where all good seamen go.

" They lowered him down in the deep,
And there in the sunset light
They boomed a broadside over his grave,
As meanin' to say ' Good-night.'

" They sailed away in the dark
To the dear little isle they knew ;
And they hung his drum by the old sea-wall
The same as he told them to.

" Two hundred years went by,
And the guns began to roar,
And England was fighting hard for her life,
As ever she fought of yore.

“ ‘ It’s only my dead that count,’
She said, as she says to-day ;
‘ It isn’t the ships and it isn’t the guns
‘Ull sweep Trafalgar’s Bay.’

“ D’you guess who Nelson was ?
You may laugh, but it’s true as true !
There was more in that pore little chawed-up chap
Than ever his best friend knew.

“ The foe was creepin’ close,
In the dark, to our white-cliffed isle ;
They were ready to leap at England’s throat
When—oh, you may smile, you may smile ;

“ But—ask of the Devonshire men ;
For they heard in the dead of night
The roll of a drum, and they saw *him* pass
On a ship all shining white.

“ He stretched out his dead cold face
And he sailed in the grand old way !
The fishes had taken an eye and an arm,
But he *swept* Trafalgar’s Bay.”

THE GREAT NORTH ROAD.

JUST as the moon was rising, I met a ghostly pedlar
 Singing for company beneath his ghostly load,—
 “Once, there were velvet lads with vizards on their faces,
 Riding up to rob me on the Great North Road.

Now, my pack is heavy, and my pocket full of guineas
 Chimes like a wedding-peal, but little I enjoy
 Roads that never echo to the chirrup of their canter,—
 The gay Golden Farmer and the Hereford Boy.

Rogues were they all, but their raid was from Elf-land !
 Shod with elfin silver were the steeds they bestrode.
 Merlin buckled on the spurs that wheeled thro’ the wet
 fern

Bright as Jack-o’-lanthorns off the Great North Road.

Tales were told in country inns when Turpin rode to
 Rippleside !

Puck tuned the fiddle-strings, and country maids grew
 coy,

Tavern doors grew magical when Colonel Jack might tap
 at them,

The gay Golden Farmer and the Hereford Boy.”

“What are you seeking, then ?” I asked this honest
 pedlar.

—“Oh, Mulled Sack or Natty Hawes might ease me of
 my load !”—

“Where are they flown then ?”—“Flown where I follow ;
 They are all gone for ever up the Great North Road.

Rogues were they all ; but the white dust assoils ’em !

Paradise without a spice of devilry would cloy.
 Heavy is my pack till I meet with Jerry Abershaw,
 The gay Golden Farmer and the Hereford Boy.”

THE BALLAD OF DICK TURPIN.

THE daylight moon looked quietly down
Through the gathering dusk on London town.

A smock-frockt yokel hobbled along
By Newgate, humming a country song.

Chewing a straw, he stood to stare
At the proclamation posted there :

*Three hundred guineas on Turpin's head,
Trap him alive or shoot him dead ;
And a hundred more for his mate, Tom King.*

He crouched, like a tiger about to spring.

Then he looked up, and he looked down ;
And, chuckling low, like a country clown,

Dick Turpin painfully hobbled away
In quest of his Inn—*The Load of Hay*.

Alone in her stall, his mare, Black Bess,
Lifted her head in mute distress ;

For five strange men had entered the yard
And looked at her long, and looked at her hard.

They went out, muttering under their breath ;
And then—the dusk grew still as death.

But the velvet ears of the listening mare
Lifted and twitched. *They were there—still there ;*

Hidden and waiting ; for whom ? And why ?
The clock struck four. A step drew nigh.

It was King ! Tom King ! Dick Turpin's mate.
The black mare whinneyed. Too late ! Too late !

They rose like shadows out of the ground
And grappled him there, without a sound.

" Throttle him—quietly—choke him dead !
Or we lose the hawk for a jay," they said.

They wrestled and heaved, five men to one ;
And a yokel entered the yard, alone ;

A smock-frockt yokel, hobbling slow ;
But a fight is physic, as all men know.

His age dropped off. He stood upright.
He leapt like a tiger into the fight.

Hand to hand, they fought in the dark ;
For none could fire at a twisting mark,

Where he that shot at a foe might send
His pistol-ball through the skull of a friend.

But "*Shoot, Dick, shoot !*" gasped out Tom King.
"*Shoot, or damn it, we both shall swing !*

Shoot and chance it !" Dick leapt back.
He drew. He fired. At the pistol's crack

The wrestlers whirled. They scattered apart,
And the bullet drilled through Tom King's heart.

Dick Turpin dropped his smoking gun.
They had trapped him now, five men to one.

A gun in each hand of the crouching five,
They could take Dick Turpin now, alive ;

Take him and bind him and tell their tale
As a pot-house boast, when they drank their ale.

He whistled, soft as a bird might call ;
And a head-rope snapped in his bird's dark stall.

He whistled, soft as a nightingale.
He heard the swish of her swinging tail.

There was no way out that the five could see,
To heaven or hell, but the Tyburn tree ;

No door but death ; and yet, once more,
He whistled, as though at a sweetheart's door.

The five men laughed at him, trapped alive ;
And—the door crashed open behind the five !

Out of the stable, a wave of thunder,
Swept Black Bess, and the five went under.

He leapt to the saddle. A hoof-spurned stone
Flashed blue fire, and their prize was gone.

II.

Away, through the ringing cobbled street, and out by
the Northern Gate,
He rode that night, like a ghost in flight, from the dogs
of his own fate.

By Crackskull Common, and Highgate Heath, he heard
the chase behind ;
But he rode to forget—forget—forget—the hounds of
his own mind.

And cherry-black Bess on the Enfield Road flew light as
a bird to her goal ;
But her Rider carried a heavier load, in his own struggling
soul.

He needed neither spur nor whip. He was borne on a
darker gale.
He rode like a hurricane-hunted ship, with the doom-
wind in her sail.

He rode for the one impossible thing ; that, in the
morning light,
The towers of York might waken him—from London,
and last night.

He rode to prove himself another, and leave himself
behind ;
And the hunted self was like a cloud ; but the hunter
like the wind.

Neck and neck they rode together ; that, in the day's
first gleam,
Each might prove that the other self was but a mocking
dream.

And the little sleeping villages, and the breathless
country-side,
Woke to the drum of the racing hoofs ; but missed that
ghostly ride.

They did not hear, they did not see, as the drumming
hoofs drew nigh,
The dark magnificent thief in the night that rode so
subtly by.

They woke. They rushed to the wayside door. They
saw what the midnight showed,—
A mare that came like a crested wave along the Great
North Road ;

A flying spark in the formless dark, a flash from the
hoof-spurned stone,
And the lifted face of a Man, that took the star-light,
and was gone.

They heard the shout of the pounding chase, three
hundred yards away.
There were fourteen men in a steam of sweat and a
plaster of Midland clay.

The star-light struck their pistol-butts, as they passed in
a clattering crowd,
*But the hunting wraith was away like the wind at the heels
of the hunted cloud.*

He rode by the walls of Nottingham ; and, over him as
he went,
Like ghosts across the Great North Road, the boughs of
Sherwood bent.

By Bawtrey all the chase but one had dropt a league
behind,
Yet that one Rider hunted him, invisibly, as the wind.

And northward, like a blacker night, he saw the moors
up-loom,
And Don and Derwent sang to him, like memory in the
gloom,

And northward, northward as he rode, and sweeter than
a prayer
The voices of those hidden streams, the Trent and Ouse
and Aire ;

Streams that could never slake his thirst. He heard
them as they flowed.
But one dumb Shadow hunted him along the Great
North Road.

Till now, at dawn, the towers of York, rose on the reddening sky,
And Bess went down between his knees, like a breaking wave, to die.

He lay beside her in the ditch. He kissed her lovely head ;
And a Shadow passed him like the wind, and left him with his dead.

He saw, but not as one that wakes, the City that he sought ;
He had escaped from London town, but not from his own thought.

He strode up to the Mickle-gate with none to say him nay ;
And there he met his Other Self, in the stranger light of day.

He strode up to the dreadful Thing that in the gateway stood ;
And it stretched out a ghostly hand that the dawn had stained with blood.

It stood, as in the gates of hell, with none to hear or see.
“ *Welcome !* ” it said, “ *thou’st ridden well ; and outstript all but me.* ”

THE ISLAND HAWK.

I.

Chorus—

*Ships have swept with my conquering name
Over the waves of war,
Swept thro' the Spaniards' thunder and flame
To the splendour of Trafalgar :
On the blistered decks of their dread renown,
In the strength of my storm-beat wings,
Hawkins and Hawke went sailing down
To the harbour of deep-sea kings !
By the storm-beat wings of the hawk, the hawk,
Bent beak and pitiless breast.
They clove their way thro' the red sea-fray :
Who wakens me now to the quest ?*

II.

Hushed are the whimpering winds on the hill,
Dumb is the shrinking plain,
And the songs that enchanted the woods are still
As I shoot to the skies again !
Does the blood grow black on my fierce bent beak,
Does the down still cling to my claw ?
Who brightened these eyes for the prey they seek ?
Life, I follow thy law !
*For I am the hawk, the hawk, the hawk !
Who knoweth my pitiless breast ?
Who watcheth me sway in the wild wind's way ?
Flee—flee—for I quest, I quest.*

III.

As I glide and glide with my peering head,
Or swerve at a puff of smoke,
Who watcheth my wings on the wind outspread,
Here—gone—with an instant stroke ?
Who toucheth the glory of life I feel
As I buffet this great glad gale,
Spire and spire to the cloud-world, wheel,
Loosen my wings and sail ?
*For I am the hawk, the island hawk,
Who knoweth my pitiless breast ?
Who watcheth me sway in the sun's bright way ?
Flee—flee—for I quest, I quest.*

IV.

Had they given me " Cloud-cuckoo-city " to guard
Between mankind and the sky,
Tho' the dew might shine on an April sward,
Iris had never passed by !
Swift as her beautiful wings might be
From the rosy Olympian hill,
Had Epops entrusted the gates to me
Earth were his kingdom still.
*For I am the hawk, the archer, the hawk !
Who knoweth my pitiless breast ?
Who watcheth me sway in the wild wind's way ?
Flee—flee—for I quest, I quest.*

V.

My mate in the nest on the high bright tree
Blazing with dawn and dew,
She knoweth the gleam of the world and the glee
As I drop like a bolt from the blue.

She knoweth the fire of the level flight
 As I skim, close, close to the ground,
 With the long grass lashing my breast and the bright
 Dew-drops flashing around.

*She watcheth the hawk, the hawk, the hawk
 (Oh, the red-blotched eggs in the nest !)
 Watcheth him sway in the sun's bright way.
 Flee—flee—for I quest, I quest.*

VI.

She builded her nest on the high bright wold,
 She was taught in a world afar,
 The lore that is only an April old
 Yet old as the evening star.
 Life of a far off ancient day
 In an hour unhooded her eyes.
 In the time of the budding of one green spray
 She was wise as the stars are wise.

*An eyas in eyry, a yellow-eyed hawk,
 On the old elm's burgeoning breast,
 She watcheth me sway in the wild wind's way.
 Flee—flee—for I quest, I quest.*

VII.

Spirit and sap of the sweet swift Spring,
 Fire of our island soul,
 Burn in her breast and pulse in her wing
 While the endless ages roll ;
 Avatar—she—of the perilous pride
 That plundered the golden West,
 Her glance is a sword, but it sweeps too wide
 For a rumour to trouble her rest.

*She goeth her glorious way, the hawk,
 She nurseth her brood alone :
 She will not swoop for an owlet's whoop,
 She hath calls and cries of her own,*

VIII.

There was never a dale in our isle so deep
 That her wide wings were not free
 To soar to the sovran heights and keep
 Sight of the struggling sea :

Is it there, is it here in the drifting skies,
 The realm of her future fame ?
 Look once, look once in her glittering eyes,
 Ye shall find her the same, the same.

*Up to the skies with the hawk, the hawk,
 As it was in the days of old !*

*Ye shall sail once more, ye shall soar, ye shall soar
 To the new-found realms of gold.*

IX.

She hath ridden on white Arabian steeds
 Thro' the ringing English dells,
 For the joy of a great queen, hunting in state,
 To the music of golden bells.

A queen's fair fingers have drawn the hood
 And tossed her aloft in the blue,
 A white hand eager for needless blood.

I hunt for the needs of two.

A haggard in yarak, a hawk, a hawk !

Who knoweth my pitiless breast ?

Who watcheth me sway in the sun's bright way ?

Flee—flee—for I quest, I quest.

X.

Who fashioned her wide and splendid eyes
 That have stared in the eyes of kings ?
 With a silken twist she was looped to their wrist :
 She has clawed at their jewelled rings !

Who flung her first thro' the crimson dawn
 To pluck him a prey from the skies,
 When the love-light shone upon lake and lawn
 In the valleys of Paradise?

*Who fashioned the hawk, the hawk, the hawk,
 Bent beak and pitiless breast?*

*Who watcheth him sway in the wild wind's way?
 Flee—flee—for I quest, I quest.*

XI.

Is there ever a song in all the world
 Shall say how the quest began
 With the beak and the wings that have made us kings
 And cruel—almost—as man?

The wild wind whimpers across the heath

Where the sad little tufts of blue
 And the red-stained gray little feathers of death

Flutter! *Who fashioned us? Who?*

*Who fashioned the scimitar wings of the hawk,
 Bent beak and arrowy breast?*

*Who watcheth him sway in the sun's bright way?
 Flee—flee—for I quest, I quest.*

XII.

Linnet and woodpecker, red-cap and jay,
 Shriek that a doom shall fall

One day, one day, on my pitiless way

From the sky that is over us all;

But the great blue hawk of the heavens above

Fashioned the world for his prey,—

King and queen and hawk and dove,

We shall meet in his clutch that day;

Shall I not welcome him, I, the hawk?

Yea, cry, as they shrink from his claw,

Cry, as I die, to the unknown sky,

Life, I follow thy law!

XIII.

Chorus—

Ships have swept with my conquering name . . .

Over the world and beyond,

Hark ! Bellerophon, Marlborough, Thunderer,

Condor, respond !—

On the blistered decks of their dread renown,

In the strength of my storm-beat wings,

Hawkins and Hawke went sailing down

To the glory of deep-sea kings !

By the storm-beat wings of the hawk, the hawk,

Bent beak and pitiless breast,

They clove their way thro' the red sea-fray !

Who wakens me now to the quest ?

A DEVONSHIRE SONG.

IN Devonshire now they sing no more
 At market or fair or plough.
 There are no deep cider-songs to roar
 In the red-earth country now.
 The roofs are slate instead of thatch,
 And the tall young lads are gone.
 You may pull the bobbin and lift the latch,
 But the old farm-dance is done.

*Yet the blackbird sings in the old apple-tree
 As in Uncle Tom Cobley's day ;
 And snow—white snow,—in a Devonshire night
 Is only the bloom on the spray.
 There'll be pocket-fulls, bag-fulls, barn-fulls yet,
 When the ships come home from say.
 For a good cob-wall, and a good hat and shoes,
 And a good heart last for aye.*

They say that love's more fickle of wing
 Than it was in the days gone by ;
 But a Devonshire lane dives deep in the spring,
 Ere it lifts through the fern to the sky.
 As it was in the days of good Queen Bess,
 It shall be in the age to come,
 When the sweet of the year's in the cider-press,
 And the whistling maid turns home.

*For the south wind comes, and it brings wet weather,
 And the west is cloaked with grey,
 And a whistling maid and a crowing hen
 Are wicked as frost in May ;*

*But snow—white snow,—in a Devonshire night,
Is only the bloom on the spray,
And a good cob-wall, and a good hat and shoes,
And a good heart last for aye.*

They say that Devon has fought her fight.
They say that she, too, grows old.
But the wind blew south upon New Year's night
And the moon had a ring of gold :
And a dripping June puts all in tune
For harvest, as well we know ;
So here's to thee, old apple-tree,
Thou'lt bear good apples enow.

*There were apples to spare for the Golden Hind,
When she sailed from Plymouth Bay ;
And, though Widdecombe folk be picking their geese,
There'll be apples to spare to-day ;
For snow—white snow,—in a Devonshire night,
Is only the bloom on the spray,
And a good cob-wall, and a good hat and shoes,
And a good heart last for aye.*

A DEVONSHIRE CHRISTMAS.

I.

How goes it, Father Christmas ?—
 Oh—picking—picking along !
 But give me a piece of crumple-cheese
 And you shall hear my song.
 Ay, settle your chestnuts down to roast,
 And fill me a cup of ale ;
 Then kiss the girl that you fancy most,
 And you shall hear my tale.

Chorus.

*Froth him a cup of the home-brewed
 That is both old and strong !
 How goes it, Father Christmas ?—
 Oh—picking—picking along.*

II.

From Adam and Eve to the Magi,
 The ghosts of the old time fade ;
 And I, myself, would be laid on the shelf
 If it weren't for the mirth I've made :
 And yet, tho' our youth in Paradise
 Be a fable past recall,
 We have seen the glory of sinless eyes,
 And we have watched the Fall.

Chorus.

*So fables may be fancies,
And yet not very far wrong !
How goes it, Father Christmas ?
Oh—picking—picking along !*

III.

I walked last night on Dartmoor,
The wind was bitterly cold.
My crimson cloak was a threadbare joke,
And my bones were brittle and old.
I had forgotten the world's desire,
And all the stars were dead,
When I sank right up to my knees in mire,
At the door of a cattle-shed.

Chorus.

*I saw the oldest oxen
That ever knew goad or thong ;
Their sweet breath smoked in the frosty light
Of the lanthorn that I swung.*

IV.

I saw those oxen kneeling,
So gentle and dumb and wise,
By a child that lay in the straw and smiled
At their big dark shining eyes !
While a woman breathed " *lullay, lullay,*
The Magi need not roam
So long ago, so far away,
When heaven is born at home."

Chorus.

*Then all my heart sang " Gloria."
I lacked no angel throng,
As over the lonely moor I went,
Picking—picking along.*

V.

And over the farm on the whistling fells
I saw the great star glide ;
And " Peace on earth " rang Modbury bells
And Ermington bells replied.
How goes it, Father Christmas ?
Was the burden of all their song ;
And what could a Devonshire pedlar say
But " Picking—picking along."

Chorus.

*He needs a cloak and a pair of shoes,
But his heart is young and strong !
How goes it, Father Christmas ?
Oh—picking—picking along.*

A MAY-DAY CAROL.

WHAT is the loveliest light that Spring
 Rosily parting her robe of gray
 Girdled with leaflet green, can fling
 Over the fields where her white feet stray ?
 What is the merriest promise of May
 Flung o'er the dew-drenched April flowers ?
 Tell me, you on the pear-tree spray—
Carol of birds between the showers.

What can life at its lightest bring
 Better than this on its brightest day ?
 How should we fetter the white-throat's wing
 Wild with joy of its woodland way ?
 Sweet, should love for an hour delay,
 Swift, while the primrose-time is ours !
 What is the lover's royallest lay ?—
Carol of birds between the showers.

What is the murmur of bees a-swing ?
 What is the laugh of a child at play ?
 What is the song that the angels sing ?
 (Where were the tune could the sweet notes stay
 Longer than this, to kiss and betray ?)
 Nay, on the blue sky's topmost towers,
 What is the song of the seraphim ? Say—
Carol of birds between the showers.

Thread the stars on a silver string,
 (So did they sing in Bethlehem's bowers !)
 Mirth for a little one, grief for a king,
Carol of birds between the showers.

A DEVONSHIRE DITTY.

I.

IN a leafy lane of Devon
 There's a cottage that I know,
 Then a garden—then, a gray old crumbling wall,
 And the wall's the wall of heaven
 (Where I hardly care to go)
 And there isn't any fiery sword at all.

II.

But I never went to heaven.
 There was right good reason why,
 For they sent a shining angel to me there,
 An angel, down in Devon,
 (Clad in muslin, by the bye)
 With the halo of the sunshine on her hair.

III.

Ah, whate'er the darkness covers,
 And whate'er we sing or say,
 Would you climb the wall of heaven an hour too soon
 If you knew a place for lovers
 Where the apple-blossoms stray
 Out of heaven to sway and whisper to the moon?

IV.

When we die—we'll think of Devon
Where the garden's all aglow
With the flowers that stray across the gray old wall :
Then we'll climb it, out of heaven,
From the other side you know,
Straggle over it from heaven
With the apple-blossom snow,
Tumble back again to Devon
Laugh and love as long ago,
Where there isn't any fiery sword at all.

THE TRAMP TRANSFIGURED.

(AN EPISODE IN THE LIFE OF A CORN-FLOWER
MILLIONAIRE.)

I.

ALL the way to Fairyland across the thyme and heather,
Round a little bank of fern that rustled on the sky,
Me and stick and bundle, sir, we jogged along together,—
(Changeable the weather? Well, it aint all pie!)
Just about the sunset—Won't you listen to my story?—
Look at me! I'm only rags and tatters to your eye!
Sir, that blooming sunset crowned this battered hat with
glory!
Me that was a crawling worm became a butterfly,
(Aint it hot and dry?)
Thank you, sir, thank you, sir!) a blooming butterfly.

II.

Well, it happened this way! I was lying loose and lazy,
Just as of a Sunday, you yourself might think no shame,
Puffing little clouds of smoke, and picking at a daisy,
Dreaming of your dinner, p'raps, or wishful for the
same:
Suddenly, around that ferny bank there slowly waddled—
Slowly as the finger of a clock her shadow came—
Slowly as a tortoise down that winding path she toddled,
Leaning on a crookéd staff, a poor old crookéd dame,
Limping, but not lame,
Tick, tack, tick, tack, a poor old crookéd dame.

III.

Slowly did I say, sir? Well, you've heard that funny fable

Consekind the tortoise and the race it give an 'are?
This was curiouser than that! At first I wasn't able
Quite to size the memory up that bristled thro' my hair:

Suddenly, I'd got it, with a nasty shivery feeling,
While she walked and walked and yet was not a bit more near,—

Sir, it was the tread-mill earth beneath her feet a-wheeling
Faster than her feet could trot to heaven or anywhere,
Earth's revolv'in' stair

Wheeling, while my wayside clump was kind of anchored there.

IV.

Tick, tack, tick, tack, and just a little nearer,
Inch and 'arf an inch she went, but never gained a yard.

Quiet as a fox I lay; I didn't wish to scare 'er,
Watching thro' the ferns, and thinking "What a rum old card!"

Both her wrinkled tortoise eyes with yellow resin oozing,
Both her poor old bony hands were red and seamed and scarred!

Lord, I felt as if myself was in a public boozing,
While my own old woman went about and scrubbed and charred!

Lord, it seemed so hard!

Tick, tack, tick, tack, she never gained a yard.

V.

Yus, and there in front of her—I hadn't seen it rightly—
Lurked that little finger-post to point another road,
Just a tiny path of poppies twisting infi-nite-ly
Through the whispering seas of wheat, a scarlet thread that showed

White with ox-eye daisies here and there and chalky
 cobbles,
 Blue with waving corn-flowers : far and far away it
 glowed,
 Winding into heaven, I thinks ; but, Lord, the way she
 hobbles,
 Lord, she'll never reach it, for she bears too great a
 load ;
 Yus, and then I knowed,
 If she did, she couldn't, for the board was marked
No Road.

VI.

Tick, tack, tick, tack, I couldn't wait no longer !
 Up I gets and bows polite and pleasant as a toff—
 “ Arternoon,” I says, “ I'm glad your boots are going
 stronger ;
 Only thing I'm dreading is your feet 'ull both come off.”
Tick, tack, tick, tack. She didn't stop to answer.
 “ Arternoon,” she says, and sort o' chokes a little
 cough,
 “ I must get to Piddinghoe to-morrow if I can, sir ! ”
 “ Demme, my good woman ! Haw ! Don't think I
 mean to loff,”
 Says I, like a toff,
 “ Where d'you mean to sleep to-night ? God made
 this grass for go'ff.”

VII.

Tick, tack, tick, tack, and smilingly she eyed me.
 (Dreadful the low cunning of these creechars, don't
 you think ?)
 “ That's all right ! The weather's bright. Them bushes
 there 'ull hide me.
 Don't the gorse smell nice ? ” I felt my derved old
 eyelids blink !

"Supper? I've a crust of bread, a big one, and a bottle,"

(Just as I expected! Ah, these creechars always drink!)

"Sugar and water and half a pinch of tea to rinse my throatle,

Then I'll curl up cosy!"—"If you're cotched it means the clink!"

—"Yus, but don't you think

If a star should see me, God 'ull tell that star to wink?"

VIII.

"Now, look here," I says, "I don't know what your blooming age is!"

"Three-score years and five," she says, "that's five more years to go

Tick, tack, tick, tack, before I gets my wages!"

"Wages all be damned," I says, "there's one thing that I know—

Gals that stay out late o' nights are sure to meet wi' sorrow.

Speaking as a toff," I says, "it isn't *comme il faut*!

Tell me why you want to get to Piddinghoe to-morrow."—

"That was where my son worked, twenty years ago!"—

"Twenty years ago?

Never wrote? May still be there? Remember you?

. . . Just so!"

IX.

Yus, it was a drama; but she weren't my long-lost parent!

Tick, tack, tick, tack, she trotted all the while,

Never getting forrarder, and not the least aware on't,

Though I stood beside her with a sort of silly smile

Stock-still ! *Tick, tack !* This blooming world's a bubble :
 There I stood and stared at it, mile on flowery mile,
 Chasing o' the sunset.—“ Gals are sure to meet wi' trouble
 Staying out o' nights,” I says, once more, and tries to
 smile,
 “ Come, that aint your style,
 Here's a shilling, mother, for to-day I've made my
 pile ! ”

X.

Yus, a dozen coppers, all my capital, it fled, sir,
 Representin' twelve bokays that cost me nothink each,
 Twelve bokays o' corn-flowers blue that grew beside my
 bed, sir,
 That same day, at sunrise, when the sky was like a
 peach :
 Easy as a poet's dreams they blossomed round my head,
 sir,
 All I had to do was just to lift my hand and reach :
 So, upon the roaring waves I cast my blooming bread,
 sir,
 Bread I'd earned with nose-gays on the bare-foot
 Brighton beach,
 Nose-gays *and* a speech,
 All about the bright blue eyes they matched on
 Brighton beach.

XI.

Still, you've only got to hear the bankers on the budget,
 Then you'll know the giving game is hardly “ high
 finance ” ;
 Which no more it wasn't for that poor old dame to
 trudge it,
Tick, tack, tick, tack, on such a devil's dance :

Crumbs, it took me quite aback to see her stop so
humble,

Casting up into my face a sort of shiny glance,
Bless you, bless you, that was what I thought I heard her
mumble,

Lord, a prayer for poor old Bill, a rummy sort of
chance !

Crumbs, that shiny glance
Kinder made me king of all the sky from here to
France.

XII.

Tick, tack, tick, tack, but now she toddled faster :

Soon she'd reach the little twisted by-way through
the wheat.

"Look 'ee here," I says, "young woman, don't you
court disaster !

Peepin' through yon poppies there's a cottage trim
and neat,

White as chalk and sweet as turf : wot price a bed for
sorrow,

Sprigs of lavender between the pillow and the sheet ? "

"No," she says, "I've got to get to Piddinghoe to-
morrow !

P'raps they'd tell the work'us ! And I've lashings here
to eat :

Don't the gorse smell sweet ? " . . .

Well, I turned and left her plodding on beside the
wheat.

XIII.

Every cent I'd given her like a hero in a story ;

Yet, alone with leagues of wheat I seemed to grow
aware

Solomon himself, arrayed in all his golden glory,

Couldn't vie with Me, the corn-flower king, the
millionaire !

How to cash those bright blue cheques that night ? My
trouser pockets
Jingled sudden ! Six more pennies, crept from James
knew where !
Crumbs ! I hurried back with eyes just bulging from
their sockets,
Pushed 'em in the old dame's fist and listened for the
prayer,
Shamming not to care,
Bill—the blarsted chicken-thief, the corn-flower mil-
lionaire.

XIV.

Tick, tack, tick, tack, and faster yet she clattered !
Ay, she'd almost gained a yard ! I left her once again.
Feeling very warm inside and sort of 'ighly flattered,
On I plodded, all alone, with hay-stacks in my brain.
Suddenly, with *chink—chink—chink*, the old sweet jingle
Startled me ! 'T WAS THRUPPENCE MORE ! three
coppers round and plain !
Lord, temptation struck me and I felt my gullet tingle.
Then—I hurried back beside them seas of golden grain :
No, I can't explain ;
There I thrust 'em in her fist, and left her once again.

XV.

Tinkle-chink ! THREE HA'PENCE ! If the vulgar frac-
tions followed,
Big fleas have little fleas ! It flashed upon me there,—
Like the snakes of Pharaoh which the snakes of Moses
swallowed
All the world was playing at the tortoise and the hare :
Half the smallest atom is—my soul was getting tipsy—
Heaven is one big circle and the centre's everywhere,
Yus, and that old woman was an angel and a gipsy,
Yus, and Bill, the chicken-thief, the corn-flower
millionaire,
Shamming not to care,
What was he ? A seraph on the misty rainbow-stair !

XVI.

Don't you make no doubt of it ! The deeper that you
look, sir,

All your ancient poets tell you just the same as me,—
What about old Ovid and his most indecent book, sir,

Morphosising females into flower and star and tree ?

What about old Proteus and his 'ighly curious 'abits,

Mixing of his old grey beard into the old grey sea ?

What about old Darwin and the hat that brought forth
rabbits,

Mud and slime that growed into the pomp of Nineveh ?

What if there should be

One great Power beneath it all, one God in you and me ?

XVII.

Anyway, it seemed to me I'd struck the world's pump-
handle !

" Back with that three ha'pence, Bill," I mutters, " or
you're lost."

Back I hurries thro' the dusk where, shining like a candle,
Pale before the sunset stood that fairy finger-post.

Sir, she wasn't there ! I'd struck the place where all
roads crost,

All the roads in all the world.

She couldn't yet have trotted
Even to the . . . Hist ! a stealthy step behind ? A
ghost ?

Swish ! A flying noose had caught me round the neck !
Garotted !

Back I staggered, clutching at the moonbeams, yus,
almost

Throttled ! Sir, I boast
Bill is tough, but . . . when it comes to throttling
by a ghost !

.

XVIII.

Winged like a butterfly, tall and slender
Out It steps with the rope on its arm.
“Crumbs,” I says, “all right ! I surrender !
When have I crossed you or done you harm ?
Ef you’re a sperrit,” I says, “O, crikey,
Ef you’re a sperrit, get hence, vamoose ! ”
Sweet as music, she spoke—“ I’m Psyche ! ”—
Choking me still with her silken noose.

XIX.

Straight at the word from the ferns and blossoms
Fretting the moon-rise over the downs,
Little blue wings and little white bosoms,
Little white faces with golden crowns,
Peeped, and the colours came twinkling round me,
Laughed, and the turf grew purple with thyme,
Danced, and the sweet crushed scents nigh drowned
me,
Sang, and the hare-bells rang in chime.

XX.

All around me, gliding and gleaming,
Fair as a fallen sunset-sky,
Butterfly wings came drifting, dreaming,
Clouds of the little folk clustered nigh,
Little white hands like pearls uplifted
Cords of silk in shimmering skeins,
Cast them about me and dreamily drifted,
Winding me round with their soft warm chains.

XXI.

Round and round me they dizzily floated,
Binding me faster with every turn :
Crumbs, my pals would have grinned and gloated
Watching me over that fringe of fern,

Bill, with his battered old hat outstanding
 Black as a foam-swept rock to the moon,
 Bill, like a rainbow of silks expanding
 Into a beautiful big cocoon,—

XXII.

Big as a cloud, though his hat still crowned him,
 Yus, and his old boots bulged below :
 Seas of colour went shimmering round him,
 Dancing, glimmering, glancing, a-glow !
 Bill knew well what them elves were at, sir,—
 Aint you an en-to-mol-o-gist ?
 Well, despite of his old black hat, sir,
 Bill was *becoming*—*a chrysalist*.

.

XXIII.

Muffled, smothered in a sea of emerald and opal,
 Down a dazzling gulf of dreams I sank and sank away,
 Wound about with twenty thousand yards of silken
 rope, all
 Shimmering into crimson, glimmering into gray,
 Drowsing, waking, living, dying, just as you regards it,
 Buried in a sunset-cloud, or cloud of breaking day,
 'Cording as from East or West yourself might look
 towards it,
 Losing, gaining, lost in darkness, ragged, grimy, gay,
 'And-cuffed, not to say
 Gagged, but both my shoulders budding, sprouting
 white as May.

XXIV.

Sprouting like the milky buds o' hawthorn in the night-
 time,
 Pouting like the snowy buds o' roses in July,
 Spreading in my chrysalist and waiting for the right time,
 When—I thought—they'd bust to wings and Bill
 would rise and fly,

Tick, tack, tick, tack, as if it came in answer,
 Sweeping o'er my head again the tide o' dreams went
 by,—
I must get to Piddinghoe to-morrow if I can, sir,
Tick, tack, a crackle in my chrysalist, a cry !
 Then the warm blue sky
 Bust the shell, and out crept Bill—a blooming butterfly.

.

XXV.

Blue as a corn-flower, blazed the zenith : the deepening
 East like a scarlet poppy
 Burned while, dazzled with golden bloom, white clouds
 like daisies, green seas like wheat,
 Gripping the sign-post, first, I climbs, to sun my wings,
 which were wrinkled and floppy,
 Spreading 'em white o'er the words *No Road*, and
 hanging fast by my six black feet.

XXVI.

Still on my head was the battered old beaver, but
 through it my clubbed antennæ slanted,
 ("Feelers" yourself would probably call 'em) my
 battered old boots were hardly seen
 Under the golden fluff of the tail ! It was Bill, sir, Bill,
 though highly enchanted,
 Spreading his beautiful snow-white pinions, tipped
 with orange, and veined with green.

XXVII.

Yus, old Bill was an Orange-tip, a spirit in glory, a
 blooming Psyche !
 New, it was new from East to West this rummy old
 world that I dreamed I knew,
 How can I tell you the things that I saw with my—what
 shall I call 'em ?—"feelers ?"—O, crikey,
 "FEELERS ?" You know how the man born blind
 described such colours as scarlet or blue.

XXVIII.

“Scarlet,” he says, “is the sound of a trumpet, blue is a flute,” for he hasn’t a notion!

No, nor nobody living on earth can tell it him plain,
if he hasn’t the sight!

That’s how it stands with ragged old Bill, a-drift and
a-dream on a measureless ocean,

Gifted wi’ fifteen new-born senses, and seeing you
blind to their new strange light.

XXIX.

How can I tell you? Sir, you must wait, till you die
like Bill, ere you understand it!

Only—I saw—the same as a bee that strikes to his
hive ten leagues away—

Straight as a die, while I winked and blinked on that
sun-warmed wood and my wings expanded

(Whistler drawings that men call wings)—I saw—and
I flew—that’s all I can say.

XXX.

Flew over leagues of whispering wonder, fairy forests and
flowery palaces,

Love-lorn casements, delicate kingdoms, beautiful
flaming thoughts of—Him;

Feasts of a million blue-mailed angels lifting their honey-
and-wine-brimmed chalices,

Throned upon clouds—(which you’d call white clover)
down to the world’s most rosiest rim.

XXXI.

New and new and new and new, the white o’ the cliffs
and the wind in the heather,

Yus. and the sea-gulls flying like flakes of the sea that
flashed to the new-born day,

Song, song, song, song, quivering up in the wild blue
weather,

Thousands of seraphim singing together, and me just
flying and—*knowing my way.*

XXXII.

Straight as a die to Piddinghoe's dolphin, and there I
 drops in a cottage garden,
 There, on a sun-warmed window-sill, I winks and
 peeps, for the window was wide !
 Crumbs, he was there, and fast in her arms, and a-begging
 his poor old mother's pardon,
 There with his lips on her old gray hair, and her head
 on his breast, while she laughed and cried,—

XXXIII.

*" One and nine-pence that old tramp gave me, or else I
 should never have reached you, sonny,
 Never, and you just leaving the village to-day and mean-
 ing to cross the sea,
 One and nine-pence he gave me, I paid for the farmer's lift
 with half o' the money !
 Here's the ten-pence halfpenny, sonny, 'twill pay for our
 little 'ouse-warming tea."*

.

XXXIV.

*Tick, tack, tick, tack, out into the garden
 Toddles that old Fairy with his arm about her—so,
 Cuddling of her still, and still a-begging of her pardon,
 While she says " I wish the corn-flower king could
 only know !
 Bless him, bless him, once again," she says and softly
 gazes
 Up to heaven, a-smiling in her mutch as white as snow,
 All among her gilly-flowers and stocks and double daisies,
 Mignonette, forget-me-not, . . . Twenty years ago,
 All a rosy glow,
 This is how it was, she said, twenty years ago.*

.

XXXV.

Once again I seemed to wake, the vision it had fled, sir.

There I lay upon the downs : the sky was like a peach.
Yus, with twelve bokays of corn-flowers blue beside my
bed, sir,

More than usual 'andsome, so they'd bring me two-
pence each.

Easy as a poet's dreams they blossomed round my head,
sir.

All I had to do was just to lift my hand and reach,
Tie 'em with a bit of string, and earn my blooming bread,
sir,

Selling little nose-gays on the bare-foot Brighton
beach,

Nose-gays *and* a speech,

All about the bright blue eyes they matched on
Brighton beach.

XXXVI.

Overhead the singing lark and underfoot the heather,

Far and blue in front of us the unplumbed sky,

Me and stick and bundle, oh, we jogs along together,

(Changeable the weather ? Well, it aint all pie !)

Weather's like a woman, sir, and if she wants to quarrel,

If her eyes begin to flash and hair begins to fly,

You've to wait a little, then—the story has a moral—

Aint the sunny kisses all the sweeter by and bye ?—

(Crumbs, it's 'ot and dry !

Thank you, sir ! Thank you, sir !) the sweeter by and
bye.

XXXVII.

So the world's my sweetheart and I sort of want to
squeeze 'er.

Toffs 'ull get no chance of heaven, take 'em in the
lump !

Never laid in hay-fields when the dawn came over-sea,
sir ?

Guess it's true that story 'bout the needle and the
hump!
Never crept into a stack because the wind was blowing,
Hollered out a nest and closed the door-way with a
clump,
Laid and heard the whisper of the silence, growing,
growing,
Watched a thousand wheeling stars and wondered if
they'd bump?
What I say would stump
Joshua! But I've done it, sir. Don't think I'm off
my chump.

XXXVIII.

If you try and lay, sir, with your face turned up to
wonder,
Up to twenty million miles of stars that roll like one,
Right across to God knows where, and you just huddled
under
Like a little beetle with no business of his own,
There you'd hear—like growing grass—a funny silent
sound, sir,
Mixed with curious crackles in a steady undertone,
Just the sound of twenty billion stars a-going round, sir,
Yus, and you beneath 'em like a wise old ant, alone,
Ant upon a stone,
Waving of his antlers, on the Sussex downs, alone.

THE ROCK POOL.

I.

BRIGHT as a fallen fragment of the sky,
 Mid shell-encrusted rocks the sea-pool shone,
 Glassing the sunset-clouds in its clear heart,
 A small enchanted world enwalled apart
 In diamond mystery,
 Content with its own dreams, its own strict zone
 Of urchin woods, its fairy bights and bars,
 Its daisy-disked anemones and rose-feathered stars.

II.

Forsaken for a while by that deep roar
 Which works in storm and calm the eternal will,
 Drags down the cliffs, bids the great hills go by
 And shepherds their multitudinous pageantry,—
 Here, on this ebb-tide shore
 A jewelled bath of beauty, sparkling still,
 The little sea-pool smiled away the sea,
 And slept on its own plane of bright tranquillity.

III.

A self-sufficing soul, a pool in trance,
 Unstirred by all the spirit-winds that blow
 From o'er the gulfs of change, content, ere yet
 On its own crags, which rough peaked limpets fret

The last rich colours glance,
Content to mirror the sea-bird's wings of snow,
Or feel in some small creek, ere sunset fails,
A tiny Nautilus hoist its lovely purple sails ;

IV.

And, furrowing into pearl that rosy bar,
Sail its own soul from fairy fringe to fringe,
Lured by the twinkling prey 'twas born to reach
In its own pool, by many an elfin beach
Of jewels, adventuring far
Through the last mirrored cloud and sunset-tinge
And past the rainbow-dripping cave where lies
The dark green pirate crab, at watch with beaded eyes,

V.

Or fringed Medusa floats like light in light,
Medusa, with the loveliest of all fays
Pent in its irised bubble of jellied sheen,
Trailing long ferns of moonlight, shot with green
And crimson rays and white,
Waving ethereal tendrils, ghostly sprays,
Daring the deep, dissolving in the sun,
The vanishing point of life, the light whence life begun,

VI.

Poised between life, light, time, eternity,
So tinged with all, that in its delicate brain
Kindling it as a lamp with her bright wings
Day-long, night-long, young Ariel sits and sings
Echoing the lucid sea,
Listening it echo her own unearthly strain,
Watching through lucid walls the world's rich tide,
One light, one substance with her own, rise and subside.

VII.

And over soft brown woods, limpid, serene,
Puffing its fans the Nautilus went its way,
And from a hundred salt and weedy shelves
Peered little hornéd faces of sea-elves :

The prawn darted, half-seen,
Thro' watery sunlight, like a pale green ray,
And all around, in soft green waving bowers,
Creatures like fruit out-crept from fluted shells like
flowers.

VIII.

And, over all, that glowing mirror spread
A firmament of heaven-reflecting gleams,
A level wealth of tints, calm as the sky
That broods above our own mortality :

The unrestful seas had fled.
What power, unguessed in pools, could break its dreams
Or ruffle it now from any deeper deep ?
Content in its own bounds, it slept a changeless sleep.

IX.

From that wild heaven beyond its dim belief,
From that bright world beyond its glimmering ken,
Dashing great billows over its rosy bars,
Shivering its lucid shadows into stars,

Flooding each sun-dried reef
With waves of colour (as once, for mortal men
Bethesda's angel) with wide eyes, violet-wild,
Naked into the pool there stole a laughing child.

X.

Her red-gold hair against the far green seas
Blew thickly out : the slender golden form
Shone dark against the richly smouldering west,
With one slim hand she splashed her glistening breast,

Then waded up to her knees
And frothed the whole pool into a fairy storm,
While quietly through our loftier skies there came,
The heavenly light that sets this world's dark pool
aflame.

XI.

From which the seas of faith have ebbed away,
Leaving the lonely shore too bright, too bare,
While mirrored softly in the smooth wet sand
A deeper sunset sees its blooms expand
But all too phantom-fair,
Between the dark brown rocks and sparkling spray
Where the low ripples pleaded, shrank and sighed,
And tossed a moment's rainbow heavenward ere they
died.

XII.

Stoop, starry souls, incline to this dark coast,
Where all too long, too faithlessly, we dream.
Stoop to the world's dark pool, its crags and scars,
Its yellow sands, its rosy harbour-bars,
And soft green wastes that gleam
But with some glorious drifting god-like ghost
Of cloud, some vaguely passionate crimson stain :
Rend the blue waves of heaven, shatter our sleep again !

ON A RAILWAY PLATFORM.

A DRIZZLE of drifting rain
 And a blurred white lamp o'erhead,
 That shines as my love will shine again
 In the world of the dead.

Round me the wet black night,
 And, afar in the limitless gloom,
 Crimson and green, two blossoms of light,
 Two stars of doom.

But the night of death is aflare
 With a torch of back-blown fire,
 And the coal-black deeps of the quivering air
 Rend for my soul's desire.

Leap, heart, for the pulse and the roar
 And the lights of the streaming train
 That leaps with the heart of thy love once more
 Out of the mist and the rain.

Out of the desolate years
 The thundering pageant flows ;
 But I see no more than a window of tears
 Which her face has turned to a rose.

THE SEA-MARK.

WHEN death divides us, and my soul must go,
 Whirled on the seas of universal night,
 If I could see one smallest spark of light
 Beyond that unremembering ebb and flow,
 One only constant star, dear, I should know
 That neither life, nor death, nor depth, nor height,
 Could utterly divide you from my sight ;
 For, in that sea-mark, all our love would glow.

Set it a myriad light-years past the scope
 Of our terrestrial vision, my fixed eyes
 Should hold it, knowing your eyes would hold it, too ;
 Steered by that light, my lonely sail of hope
 Should steal, through all those vast and desolate skies
 Nearer, with every conquered age, to you.

THE LIGHTS OF HOME.

PILOT, how far from home ?—
 Not far, not far to-night,
 A flight of spray, a sea-bird's flight,
 A flight of tossing foam,
 And then the lights of home !—

And, yet again, how far ?
 And seems the way so brief ?
 Those lights beyond the roaring reef
 Were lights of moon and star,
 Far, far, none knows how far !

Pilot, how far from home ?—
 The great stars pass away
 Before Him as a flight of spray,
 Moons as a flight of foam !
 I see the lights of home.

THE TORCH-BEARERS.

(PROLOGUE to Volume I.)

THE OBSERVATORY.

AT noon, upon the mountain's purple height,
 Above the pine-woods and the clouds it shone
 No larger than the small white dome of shell
 Left by the fledgling wren when wings are born.
 By night it joined the company of heaven,
 And, with its constant light, became a star.
 A needle-point of light, minute, remote,
 It sent a subtler message through the abyss,
 Held more significance for the seeing eye
 Than all the darkness that would blot it out,
 Yet could not dwarf it.

High in heaven it shone,
 Alive with all the thoughts, and hopes, and dreams
 Of man's adventurous mind.

Up there, I knew
 The explorers of the sky, a quiet throng
 Of pioneers, made ready to attack
 That darkness once again, and win new worlds.
 To-morrow night they hoped to crown the toil
 Of twenty years, and turn upon the sky
 The noblest weapon ever made by man.
 War had delayed them. They had been drawn away
 Designing darker weapons. But no gun
 Could outrange this,

“ To-morrow night ”—so wrote their chief—“ we try
Our great new telescope, the hundred-inch.
Your Milton’s ‘ optic tube ’ has grown in power
Since Galileo, famous, blind, and old,
Talked with him, in that prison, of the sky.
We creep to power by inches. Europe trusts
Her ‘ giant forty ’ still. Even to-night
Our own old sixty has its work to do ;
And now our hundred-inch . . . I hardly dare
To think what this new muzzle of ours may find.
Come up, and spend that night among the stars
Here, on our mountain-top. If all goes well,
Then, at the least, my friend, you’ll see a moon
Stranger, but nearer, many a thousand mile
Than earth has ever seen her, even in dreams.
As for the stars, if seeing them were all,
Three thousand million new-found points of light
Is our rough guess. But never speak of this.
You know our press. They’d miss the one result
To flash ‘ three thousand millions ’ round the world.”
To-morrow night ! For more than twenty years
They had thought and planned and worked. Ten
years had gone,
One-fourth, or more, of man’s brief working-life,
Before they made those solid tons of glass,
Their hundred-inch reflector, the clear pool,
The polished flawless pool that it must be
To hold the perfect image of a star.
And, even now, some secret flaw—none knew
Until to-morrow’s test—might waste it all.
Where was the gambler that would stake so much,—
Time, patience, treasure, on a single throw ?
The cost of it,—they’d not find that again,
Either in gold or life-stuff ! All their youth
Was fuel to the flame of this one work.
Once in a lifetime to the man of science,
Despite what fools believe his ice-cooled blood,
There comes this drama.

If he fails, he fails
Utterly. He at least will have no time
For fresh beginnings. Other men, no doubt,

Years hence, will use the footholes that he cut
In those precipitous cliffs, and reach the height,
But he will never see it.

So for me,
The light words of that letter seemed to hide
The passion of a lifetime, and I shared
The crowning moment of its hope and fear.

Next day, through whispering aisles of palm we rode
Up to the foot-hills, dreaming desert-hills
That to assuage their own delicious drought
Had set each tawny sun-kissed slope ablaze
With peach and orange orchards.

Up and up,
Along the thin white trail that wound and climbed
And zig-zagged through the grey-green mountain sage,
The car went crawling, till the shining plain
Below it, like an airman's map, unrolled.
Houses and orchards dwindled to white specks
In midget cubes and squares of tufted green.
Once, as we rounded one steep curve, that made
The head swim at the canyoned gulf below,
We saw through thirty miles of lucid air
Elvishly small, sharp as a crumpled petal
Blown from the stem, a yard away, a sail
Lazily drifting on the warm blue sea.
Up for nine miles along that spiral trail
Slowly we wound to reach the lucid height
Above the clouds, where that white dome of shell,
No wren's now, but an eagle's, took the flush
Of dying day. The sage-brush all died out,
And all the southern growths, and round us now,
Firs of the north, and strong, storm-rooted pines
Exhaled a keener fragrance ; till, at last,
Reversing all the laws of lesser hills,
They towered like giants round us. Darkness fell
Before we reached the mountain's naked height.

Over us, like a great cathedral dome,
The observatory loomed against the sky ;

And the dark mountain with its headlong gulfs
Had lost all memory of the world below ;
For all those cloudless throngs of glittering stars,
And all those glimmerings where the abyss of space
Is powdered with a milky dust, each grain
A burning sun, and every sun the lord
Of its own darkling planets,—all those lights
Met, in a darker deep, the lights of earth,
Lights on the sea, lights of invisible towns,
Trembling and indistinguishable from stars,
In those black gulfs around the mountain's feet.
Then, into the glimmering dome, with bated breath,
We entered, and, above us, in the gloom
Saw that majestic weapon of the light
Uptowering like the shaft of a huge gun
Through one arched rift of sky.

Dark at its base
With naked arms, the crew that all day long
Had sweated to make ready for this night
Waited their captain's word.

The switchboard shone
With elfin lamps of white and red, and keys
Whence, at a finger's touch, that monstrous tube
Moved like a creature dowered with life and will,
To peer from deep to deep.

Below it pulsed
The clock-machine that slowly, throb by throb,
Timed to the pace of the revolving earth,
Drove the Titanic muzzle on and on,
Fixed to the chosen star that else would glide
Out of its field of vision.

So, set free
Balanced against the wheel of time, it swung,
Or rested, while, to find new realms of sky
The dome that housed it, like a moon revolved,
So smoothly that the watchers hardly knew
They moved within ; till, through the glimmering
doors,
They saw the dark procession of the pines
Like Indian warriors, quietly stealing by.

Then, at a word, the mighty weapon dipped
 Its muzzle and aimed at one small point of light,
 One seeming insignificant star.

The chief,
 Mounting the ladder, while we held our breath,
 Looked through the eye-piece.

Then we heard him laugh
 His thanks to God, and hide it in a jest.
 "A prominence on Jupiter!"—

They laughed,
 "What do you mean?"—"It's moving," cried the
 chief,

They laughed again, and watched his glimmering face
 High overhead against that moving tower.
 "Come up and see, then!"

One by one they went,
 And, though each laughed as he returned to earth,
 Their souls were in their eyes.

Then I, too, looked,
 And saw that insignificant spark of light
 Touched with new meaning, beautifully reborn,
 A swimming world, a perfect rounded pearl,
 Poised in the violet sky; and, as I gazed,
 I saw a miracle,—right on its upmost edge
 A tiny mound of white that slowly rose,
 Then, like an exquisite seed-pearl, swung quite clear
 And swam in heaven above its parent world
 To greet its three bright sister-moons.

A moon,
 Of Jupiter, no more, but clearer far
 Than mortal eyes had seen before from earth.
 Beautiful, keen and clear beyond all dreams
 Was that one silver phrase of the starry tune
 Which Galileo's "old discoverer" first
 Dimly revealed, dissolving into clouds
 The imagined fabric of our universe.
*"Jupiter stands in heaven and will stand
 Though all the sycophants bark at him,"* he cried,
 Hailing the truth before he, too, went down,
 Whelmed in the cloudy wreckage of that dream.

So one by one we looked, the men who served
Urania, and the men from Vulcan's forge.
A beautiful eagerness in the darkness lit
The swarthy faces that too long had missed
A meaning in the dull mechanic maze
Of labour on this blind earth, but found it now.
Though only a moment's wandering melody
Hopelessly far above, it gave their toil
Its only consecration and its joy.
There, with dark-smouldering eyes and naked throats,
Blue-dungareed, red-shirted, grimed and smeared
With engine-grease and sweat, they gathered round
The foot of that dim ladder ; each muttering low,
As he came down, his wonder at what he saw
To those who waited,—a picture for the brush
Of Rembrandt, lighted only by the rift
Above them, where the giant muzzle thrust
Out through the dim arched roof, and slowly throbbed,
Against the slowly moving wheel of the earth,
Holding their chosen star.

There, like an elf,
Perched on the side of that dark slanting tower,
The Italian mechanic watched the moons
That Italy discovered.

One by one,
English, American, French, and Dutch, they climbed
To see the wonder that their own blind hands
Had helped to achieve.

At midnight while they paused
To adjust the clock-machine, I wandered out,
Alone, into the silence of the night.
The silence ? On that lonely height I heard
Eternal voices ;
For, as I looked into the gulf beneath,
Whence almost all the lights had vanished now,
The whole dark mountain seemed to have lost its earth
And to be sailing like a ship through heaven.
All round it surged the mighty sea-like sound
Of sougning pine-woods, one vast ebb and flow
Of absolute peace, aloof from all earth's pain,
So calm, so quiet, it seemed the cradle-song,

The deep soft breathing of the universe
Over its youngest child, the soul of man.
And, as I listened, that Æolian voice
Became an invocation and a prayer :
O you, that on your loftier mountain dwell
And move like light in light among the thoughts
Of heaven, translating our mortality
Into immortal song, is there not one
Among you that can turn to music now
This long dark fight for truth ? Not one to touch
With beauty this long battle for the light,
This little victory of the spirit of man
Doomed to defeat—for what was all we saw
To that which neither eyes nor soul could see ?—
Doomed to defeat and yet unconquerable,
Climbing its nine miles nearer to the stars.
Wars we have sung. The blind, blood-boltered kings
Move with an epic music to their thrones.
Have you no song, then, of that nobler war ?
Of those who strove for light, but could not dream
Even of this victory that they helped to win,
Silent discoverers, lonely pioneers,
Prisoners and exiles, martyrs of the truth
Who handed on the fire, from age to age ;
Of those who, step by step, drove back the night
And struggled, year on year, for one more glimpse
Among the stars, of sovran law, their guide ;
Of those who searching inward, saw the rocks
Dissolving into a new abyss, and saw
Those planetary systems far within,
Atoms, electrons, whirling on their way
To build and to unbuild our solid world ;
Of those who conquered, inch by difficult inch,
The freedom of this realm of law for man ;
Dreamers of dreams, the builders of our hope,
The healers and the binders up of wounds,
Who, while the dynasts drenched the world with
 blood,
Would in the still small circle of a lamp
Wrestle with death like Heracles of old
To save one stricken child.

Is there no song
To touch this moving universe of law
With ultimate light, the glimmer of that great dawn
Which over our ruined altars yet shall break
In purer splendour, and restore mankind
From darker dreams than even Lucretius knew,
To vision of that one Power which guides the world.
How should men find it? Only through those doors
Which, opening inward, in each separate soul
Give each man access to that Soul of all
Living within each life, not to be found
Or known, till, looking inward, each alone
Meets the unknowable and eternal God.

And there was one that moved like light in light
Before me there,—Love, human and divine,
That can exalt all weakness into power,—
Whispering, *Take this deathless torch of song . . .*
Whispering, but with such faith, that even I
Was humbled into thinking this might be
Through love, though all the wisdom of the world
Account it folly.

Let my breast be bared
To every shaft, then, so that Love be still
My one celestial guide the while I sing
Of those who caught the pure Promethean fire
One from another, each crying as he went down
To one that waited, crowned with youth and joy,—
*Take thou the splendour, carry it out of sight
Into the great new age I must not know,
Into the great new realm I must not tread.*

THE SONG OF JEPPE.

(From Volume I.—TYCHO BRAHE.)

“WHAT !” said the king,

“Is earth a bird or bee ?

Can this uncharted boundless realm of ours
Drone thro’ the sky, with leagues of struggling sea,
Forests, and hills, and towns, and palace-towers ? ”

“Ay,” said the dwarf,

“I have watched from Stiernborg’s crown
Her far dark rim uplift against the sky ;
But, while earth soars, men say the stars go down ;
And, while earth sails, men say the stars go by.”

An elvish tale !

Ask Jeppe, the dwarf ! *He* knows.

That’s why his eyes look fey ; for, chuckling deep,
Heels over head amongst the stars he goes,

As all men go ; but most are sound asleep.
King, saint, and sage,

Even those that count it true,
Act as this miracle touched them not at all.
They are borne, undizzied, thro’ the rushing blue,
And build their empires on a sky-tossed ball.

Then said the king,

“If earth so lightly move,

What of my realm ? Oh, what shall now stand sure ? ”

“Nought,” said the dwarf, “in all this world but love.
All else is dream-stuff and shall not endure.

'Tis nearer now !

Our universe hath no centre,
Our shadowy earth and fleeting heavens no stay,
But that deep inward realm which each can enter,
Even Jeppe, the dwarf, by his own secret way."

"Where ? " said the king,

"Oh, where ? I have not found it ! "

"Here," said the dwarf, and music echoed "here."

"This infinite circle hath no line to bound it ;

Therefore its deep strange centre is everywhere.

Let the earth soar thro' heaven, that centre abideth ;

Or plunge to the pit, His covenant still holds true.

In the heart of a dying bird, the Master hideth ;

In the soul of a king," said the dwarf, "and in *my*
soul, too."

GALILEO.

(From Volume I.)

I.

*(Celeste, in the Convent at Arcetri, writes to her
old lover at Rome.)*

My friend, my dearest friend, my own dear love,
I, who am dead to love, and see around me
The funeral tapers lighted, send this cry
Out of my heart to yours, before the end.
You told me once you would endure the rack
To save my heart one pang. Oh, save it now !
Last night there came a dreadful word from Rome
For my dear lord and father, summoning him
Before the inquisitors there, to take his trial
At threescore years and ten. There is a threat
Of torture, if his lips will not deny
The truth his eyes have seen.

You know my father,

You know me, too. You never will believe
That he and I are enemies of the faith.
Could I, who put away all earthly love,
Deny the Cross to which I nailed this flesh ?
Could he, who, on the night when all those heavens
Opened above us, with their circling worlds,
Knelt with me, crushed beneath that weight of glory,
Forget the Maker of that glory now ?
You'll not believe it. Neither would the Church.
Had not his enemies poisoned all the springs
And fountain-heads of truth. It is not Rome
That summons him, but Magini, Sizi, Scheiner,

Lorini, all the blind, pedantic crew
That envy him his fame, and hate his works
For dwarfing theirs.

Must such things always be
When truth is born ?

Only five nights ago we walked together,
My father and I, here in the Convent garden ;
And, as the dusk turned everything to dreams,
We dreamed together of his work well done
And happiness to be. We did not dream
That even then, muttering above his book,
His enemies, those enemies whom the truth
Stings into hate, were plotting to destroy him.
Yet something shadowed him. I recall his words—
“ The grapes are ripening. See, Celeste, how black
And heavy. We shall have good wine this year.”—
“ Yes, all grows ripe,” I said, “ your life-work, too,
Dear father. Are you happy now to know
Your book is printed, and the new world born ? ”
He shook his head, a little sadly, I thought.
“ Autumn’s too full of endings. Fruits grow ripe
And fall, and then comes winter.”

“ Not for you !
Never,” I said, “ for those who write their names
In heaven. Think, father, through all ages now
No one can ever watch that starry sky
Without remembering you. Your fame . . . ”
And there

He stopped me, laid his hand upon my arm,
And standing in the darkness with dead leaves
Drifting around him, and his bare grey head
Bowed in complete humility, his voice
Shaken and low, he said like one in prayer,
“ Celeste, beware of that. Say truth, not fame.
If there be any happiness on earth,
It springs from truth alone, the truth we live
In act and thought. I have looked up there and seen
Too many worlds to talk of fame on earth.
Fame, on this grain of dust among the stars,
The trumpet of a gnat that thinks to halt
The great sun-clusters moving on their way

In silence ! Yes, that's fame. But truth, Celeste,
 Truth and its laws are constant, even up there ;
 That's where one man may face and fight the world.
 His weakness turns to strength. He is made one
 With universal forces, and he holds
 The password to eternity.
 Gate after gate swings back through all the heavens.
 No sentry halts him, and no flaming sword.
 Say truth, Celeste, not fame."

" No, for I'll say
 A better word," I told him. " I'll say love."
 He took my face between his hands and said—
 His face all dark between me and the stars—
 " What's love, Celeste, but this dear face of truth
 Upturned to heaven ? "

He left me, and I heard,
 Some twelve hours later, that this man whose soul
 Was dedicate to truth, was threatened now
 With torture, if his lips did not deny
 The truth he loved.

I tell you all these things
 Because to help him, you must understand him ;
 And even you may doubt him, if you hear
 Only those plausible outside witnesses
 Who never heard his heart-beats as have I.
 So let me tell you all—his quest for truth,
 And how this hate began.

Even from the first,
 He made his enemies of those almost-minds
 Who chanced upon some new thing in the dark
 And could not see its meaning, for he saw,
 Always, the law illumining it within.
 So when he heard of that strange optic-glass
 Which brought the distance near, he thought it out
 By reason, where that other hit upon it
 Only by chance. He made his telescope ;
 And O, how vividly that day comes back,
 When in their gorgeous robes the Senate stood
 Beside him on that high Venetian tower,
 Scanning the bare blue sea that showed no speck
 Of sail. Then, one by one, he bade them look ;

And one by one they gasped, " a miracle."
Brown sails and red, a fleet of fishing boats,
See how the bright foam bursts around their bows !
See how the bare-legged sailors walk the decks !
Then, quickly looking up, as if to catch
The vision ere it tricked them, all they saw
Was empty sea again.

Many believed
That all was trickery, but he bade them note
The colours of the boats, and count their sails.
Then, in a little while, the naked eye
Saw on the sky-line certain specks that grew,
Took form and colour ; and, within an hour,
Their magic fleet came foaming into port.
Whereat old senators, wagging their white beards,
And plucking at golden chains with stiff old claws
Too feeble for the sword-hilt, squeaked at once :
" This glass will give us great advantages
In time of war."

War, war, O God of love,
Even amidst their wonder at Thy world,
Dazed with new beauty, gifted with new powers,
These old men dreamed of blood. This was the thought
To which all else must pandar, if he hoped
Even for one hour to see those dull eyes blaze
At his discoveries.

" Wolves," he called them, " wolves " ;
And yet he humoured them. He stooped to them,
Promised them more advantages, and talked
As elders do to children. You may call it
Weakness, and yet could any man do more,
Alone, against a world, with such a trust
To guard for future ages ? All his life
He has had some weanling truth to guard, has fought
Desperately to defend it, taking cover
Wherever he could, behind old fallen trees
Of superstition, or ruins of old thought.
He has read horoscopes to keep his work
Among the stars in favour with his prince.
I tell you this that you may understand
What seems inconstant in him. It may be

That he was wrong in these things, and must pay
 A dreadful penalty. But you must explore
 His mind's great ranges, plains and lonely peaks
 Before you know him, as I know him now.
 How could he talk to children but in words
 That children understand? Have not some said
 That God Himself has made His glory dark
 For men to bear it? In his human sphere
 My father has done this.

War was the dream
 That filmed those old men's eyes. They did not hear
 My father, when he hinted at his hope
 Of opening up the heavens for mankind
 With that new power of bringing far things near.
 My heart burned as I heard him; but they blinked
 Like owls at noonday. Then I saw him turn,
 Desperately, to humour them, from thoughts
 Of heaven to thoughts of warfare.

Late that night
 My own dear lord and father came to me
 And whispered, with a glory in his face
 As one who has looked on things too beautiful
 To breathe aloud, "Come out, Celeste, and see
 A miracle."

I followed him. He showed me,
 Looking along his outstretched hand, a star,
 A point of light above our olive-trees.
 It was the star called Jupiter. And then
 He bade me look again, but through his glass.
 I feared to look at first, lest I should see
 Some wonder never meant for mortal eyes.
 He too had felt the same, not fear, but awe,
 As if his hand were laid upon the veil
 Between this world and heaven.

Then . . . I, too, saw,
 Small as the smallest bead of mist that clings
 To a spider's thread at dawn, the floating disk
 Of what had been a star, a planet now,
 And near it, with no disk that eyes could see,
 Four needle-points of light, unseen before.
 "The moons of Jupiter," he whispered low,

I have watched them as they moved, from night to night ;

A system like our own, although the world
 Their fourfold lights and shadows make so strange
 Must—as I think—be mightier than we dreamed,
 A Titan planet. Earth begins to fade
 And dwindle ; yes, the heavens are opening now.
 Perhaps up there, this night, some lonely soul
 Gazes at earth, watches our dawning moon,
 And wonders, as we wonder.”

In that dark

We knelt together . . .

Very strange to see

The vanity and fickleness of princes.
 Before his enemies had provoked the wrath
 Of Rome against him, he had given the name
 Of Medicean stars to those four moons
 In honour of Prince Cosmo. This aroused
 The court of France to seek a lasting place
 Upon the map of heaven. A letter came
 Beseeching him to find another star
 Even more brilliant, and to call it *Henri*
 After the reigning and most brilliant prince
 Of France. They did not wish the family name
 Of Bourbon. This would dissipate the glory.
 No, they preferred his proper name of *Henri*.
 We read it together in the garden here,
 Weeping with laughter, never dreaming then
 That this, this, this, could stir the little hearts
 Of men to envy.

Oh, but afterwards,

The blindness of the men who thought themselves
 His enemies. The men who never knew him,
 The men that had set up a thing of straw
 And called it by his name, and wished to burn
 Their image and himself in one wild fire.
 Men ? Were they men or children ? They refused
 Even to look through Galileo's glass,
 Lest seeing might persuade them. Even that sage,
 That great Aristotelian, Julius Libri,
 Holding his breath there, like a fractious child

Until his cheeks grew purple, and the veins
Were bursting on his brow, swore he would die
Sooner than look.

And that poor monstrous babe,
Not long thereafter, kept his word and died,
Died of his own pent rage, as I have heard.
Whereat my lord and father shook his head
And, smiling, somewhat sadly—oh, you know
That smile of his, more deadly to the false
Than even his reasoning—murmured, "*Libri, dead,
Who called the moons of Jupiter absurd !
He swore he would not look at them from earth.
I hope he saw them on his way to heaven.*"

Welser in Augsburg, Clavius at Rome.
Scoffed at the fabled moons of Jupiter.
It was a trick, they said. He had made a glass
To fool the world with false appearances.
Perhaps the lens was flawed. Perhaps his wits
Were wandering. Anything rather than the truth
Which might disturb the mighty in their seat.
"Let Galileo hold his own opinions.
I, Clavius, will hold mine."

He wrote to Kepler :
"You, Kepler, are the first, whose open mind
And lofty genius could accept for truth
The things which I have seen. With you for friend,
The abuse of the multitude will not trouble me.
Jupiter stands in heaven and will stand,
Though all the sycophants bark at him.

In Pisa,

Florence, Bologna, Venice, Padua,
Many have seen the moons. These witnesses
Are silent and uncertain. Do you wonder ?
Most of them could not, even when they saw them,
Distinguish Mars from Jupiter. Shall we side
With Heraclitus or Democritus ?
I think, my Kepler, we will only laugh
At this immeasurable stupidity.
Picture the leaders of our college here.
A thousand times I have offered them the proof
Of their own eyes. They sleep here, like gorged snakes,

Refusing even to look at planets, moons,
Or telescope. They think philosophy
Is all in books, and that the truth is found
Neither in Nature, nor the Universe,
But in comparing texts. How you would laugh
Had you but heard our first philosopher
Before the Grand Duke, trying to tear down
And argue the new planets out of heaven,
Now by his own weird logic and closed eyes
And now by magic spells."

How could he help
Despising them a little? It's an error
Even for a giant to despise a midge;
For, when the giant reels beneath some stroke
Of fate, the buzzing clouds will swoop upon him,
Cluster and feed upon his bleeding wounds,
And do what midges can to sting him blind.
These human midges have not missed their chance.
They have missed no smallest spot upon that sun.
My mother was not married—they have found—
To my dear father. All his children, then,
And doubtless all their thoughts are evil, too;
But who that judged him ever sought to know
Whether, as evil sometimes wears the cloak
Of virtue, nobler virtue in this man
Might wear that outward semblance of a sin?
Yes, even you who love me, may believe
These thoughts are born of my own tainted heart;
And yet I write them, kneeling in my cell
And whisper them to One who blesses me
Here, from His Cross, upon the bare grey wall.
So, if you love me, bless me also, you,
By helping him. Make plain to all you meet
What part his enemies have played in this.
How some one, somehow, altered the command
Laid on him all those years ago, by Rome,
So that it reads to-day as if he vowed
Never to think or breathe that this round earth
Moves with its sister-planets round the sun.
'Tis true he promised not to write or speak
As if this truth were 'stablished equally

With God's eternal laws ; and so he wrote
 His Dialogues, reasoning for it, and against,
 And gave the last word to Simplicius,
 Saying that human reason must bow down
 Before the power of God.

And even this
 His enemies have twisted to a sneer
 Against the Pope, and cunningly declared
 Simplicius to be Urban.

Why, my friend,
 There were three dolphins on the title-page,
 Each with the tail of another in its mouth.
 The censor had not seen this, and they swore
 It held some hidden meaning. Then they found
 The same three dolphins sprawled on all the books
 Landini printed at his Florence press.
 They tried another charge.

I am not afraid
 Of any truth that they can bring against him ;
 But, O, my friend, I more than fear their lies.
 I do not fear the justice of our God ;
 But I do fear the vanity of men ;
 Even of Urban ; not His Holiness,
 But Urban, the weak man, who may resent,
 And in resentment rush half-way to meet
 This cunning lie with credence. Vanity !
 O, half the wrongs on earth arise from that !
 Greed, and war's pomp, all envy, and most hate,
 Are born of that ; while one dear humble heart,
 Beating with love for man, between two thieves,
 Proves more than all His wounds and miracles
 Our Crucified to be the Son of God.
 Say that I long to see him ; that my prayers
 Knock at the gates of mercy, night and day.
 Urge him to leave the judgment now with God
 And strive no more.

If he be right, the stars
 Fight for him in their courses. Let him bow
 His poor, dishonoured, glorious, old grey head
 Before this storm, and then come home to me.
 Oh, quickly, or I fear 'twill be too late ;

For I am dying. Do not tell him this ;
 But I must live to hold his hands again,
 And know that he is safe.
 I dare not leave him, helpless and half blind,
 Half father and half child, to rack and cord.
 By all the Christ within you, save him, you ;
 And, though you may have ceased to love me now,
 One faithful shadow in your own last hour
 Shall watch beside you till all shadows die,
 And heaven unfold to bless you where I failed.

II.

(Scheiner writes to Castelli, after the trial.)

What think you of your Galileo now,
 Your hero that like Ajax should defy
 The lightning ? Yesterday I saw him stand
 Trembling before our court of Cardinals,
 Trembling before the colour of their robes
 As sheep, before the slaughter, at the sight
 And smell of blood. His lips could hardly speak,
 And—mark you—neither rack nor cord had touched
 him.

Out of the Inquisition's five degrees
 Of rigor : first, the public threat of torture ;
 Second, the repetition of the threat
 Within the torture-chamber, where we show
 The instruments of torture to the accused ;
 Third, the undressing and the binding ; fourth,
 Laying him on the rack ; then, fifth and last,
 Torture, *territio realis* ; out of these,
 Your Galileo reached the second only,
 When, clapping both his hands against his sides,
 He whined about a rupture that forbade
 These extreme courses. Great heroic soul
 Dropped like a cur into a sea of terror,
 He sank right under. Then he came up gasping,
 Ready to swear, deny, abjure, recant,
 Anything, everything ! Foolish, weak, old man,

Who had been so proud of his discoveries,
And dared to teach his betters. How we grinned
To see him kneeling there and whispering thus,
Through his white lips, bending his old grey head :

“ *I, Galileo Galilei, born*

*A Florentine, now seventy years of age,
Kneeling before you, having before mine eyes,
And touching with my hands the Holy Gospels,
Swear that I always have believed, do now,
And always will believe what Holy Church
Has held and preached and taught me to believe ;
And now, whereas I rightly am accused,
Of heresy, having falsely held the sun
To be the centre of our Universe,
And also that this earth is not the centre,
But moves ;*

*I most illogically desire
Completely to expunge this dark suspicion,
So reasonably conceived. I now abjure,
Detest and curse these errors ; and I swear
That should I know another, friend or foe,
Holding the selfsame heresy as myself,
I will denounce him to the Inquisitor
In whatsoever place I chance to be.
So help me God, and these His holy Gospels,
Which with my hands I touch.”*

You will observe

His promise to denounce. Beware, Castelli !
What think you of your Galileo now ?

III.

(Castelli writes, enclosing Scheiner's letter to Campanella.)

What think I ! This,—that he has laid his hands
Like Samson on the pillars of our world,
And one more trembling utterance such as this
Will overwhelm us all.

O, Campanella,
You know that I am loyal to our faith,

As Galileo too has always been.
 You know that I believe, as he believes,
 In the one Catholic Apostolic Church ;
 Yet there are many times when I could wish
 That some blind Samson would indeed tear down
 All this proud temporal fabric, made with hands,
 And that, once more, we suffered with our Lord,
 Were persecuted, crucified with Him.
 I tell you, Campanella, on that day
 When Galileo faced our Cardinals,
 A veil was rent for me. There, in one flash,
 I saw the eternal tragedy transformed
 Into new terms. I saw the Christ once more
 Before the court of Pilate. Peter there
 Denied Him once again ; and, as for me,
 Never has all my soul so humbly knelt
 To God in Christ, as when that sad old man
 Bowed his grey head, and knelt—at seventy years—
 To acquiesce, and shake the world with shame.
He shall not strive or cry ! Strange, is it not,
 How nearly Scheiner—even amidst his hate—
 Quoted the Prophets ? Do we think this world
 So greatly bettered, that the ancient cry,
 “ *Despised, rejected, hails our God no more* ” ?

IV.

*(Celeste writes to her father in his imprisonment
 at Siena.)*

Dear father, it will seem a thousand years
 Until I see you home again and well.
 I would not have you doubt that all this time
 I have prayed for you continually. I saw
 A copy of your sentence. I was grieved ;
 And yet it gladdened me, for I found a way
 To be of use, by taking on myself
 Your penance. Therefore, if you fail in this,
 If you forget it—and indeed, to save you

The trouble of remembering it—your child
Will do it for you.

Ah, could she do more !
How willingly would your Celeste endure
A straiter prison than she lives in now
To set you free.

“ A prison,” I have said ;
And yet, if you were here, ’twould not be so.
When you were pent in Rome, I used to say,
“ Would he were at Siena ! ” God fulfilled
That wish. You are at Siena ; and I now say
Would he were at Arcetri.

So perhaps
Little by little, angels can be wooed
Each day, by some new prayer of mine or yours,
To bring you wholly back to me, and save
Some few of the flying days that yet remain.
You see, these other Nuns have each their friend,
Their patron Saint, their ever near *devoto*,
To whom they tell their joys and griefs ; but I
Have only you, dear father, and if you
Were only near me, I could want no more.
Your garden looks as if it missed your love.
The unpruned branches lean against the wall
To look for you. The walks run wild with flowers.
Even your watch-tower seems to wait for you ;
And, though the fruit is not so good this year
(The vines were hurt by hail, I think, and thieves
Have climbed the wall too often for the pears),
The crop of peas is good, and only waits
Your hand to gather it.

In the dovecote, too,
You’ll find some plump young pigeons. We must
make
A feast for your return.

In my small plot,
Here at the Convent, better watched than yours,
I raised a little harvest. With the price
I got for it, I had three Masses said
For my dear father’s sake.

V.

*(Galileo writes to his friend Castelli, after his
return to Arcetri.)*

Castelli, O Castelli, she is dead.
I found her driving death back with her soul
Till I should come.

I could not even see
Her face.—These useless eyes had spent their power
On distant worlds, and lost that last faint look
Of love on earth.

I am in the dark, Castelli,
Utterly and irreparably blind.
The Universe which once these outworn eyes
Enlarged so far beyond its ancient bounds
Is henceforth shrunk into that narrow space
Which I myself inhabit.

Yet I found,
Even in the dark, her tears against my face,
Her thin soft childish arms around my neck,
And her voice whispering . . . love, undying love ;
Asking me, at this last, to tell her true,
If we should meet again.

Her trust in me
Had shaken her faith in what my judges held ,
And, as I felt her fingers clutch my hand,
Like a child drowning, " Tell me the truth," she said,
" Before I lose the light of your dear face "—
It seemed so strange that dying she could see me
While I had lost her,—" tell me, before I go."
" Believe in Love," was all my soul could breathe.
I heard no answer. Only I felt her hand
Clasp mine and hold it tighter. Then she died,
And left me to my darkness. Could I guess
At unseen glories, in this deeper night,
Make new discoveries of profounder realms,
Within the soul ? Oh, could I find Him there,
Rise to Him through His harmonies of law
And make His will my own !

This much, at least,
 I know already, that—in some strange way—
 His law implies His love ; for, failing that,
 All grows discordant, and the primal Power
 Ignobler than His children.

So I trust
 One day to find her, waiting for me still,
 When all things are made new.

I raise this torch
 Of knowledge. It is one with my right hand,
 And the dark sap that keeps it burning flows
 Out of my heart ; and yet, for all my faith,
 It shows me only darkness.

Was I wrong ?
 Did I forget the subtler truth of Rome
 And, in my pride, obscure the world's one light ?
 Did I subordinate to this moving earth
 Our swiftness-moving God ?

O, my Celeste,
 Once, once at least, you knew far more than I ;
 And she is dead, Castelli, she is dead.

VI.

*(Viviani, many years later, writes to a friend in
 England.)*

I was his last disciple, as you say
 I went to him, at seventeen years of age,
 And offered him my hands and eyes to use,
 When, voicing the true mind and heart of Rome,
 Father Castelli, his most faithful friend,
 Wrote, for my master, that compassionate plea ;
*The noblest eye that Nature ever made
 Is darkened ; one so exquisitely dowered,
 So delicate in power that it beheld
 More than all other eyes in ages gone
 And opened the eyes of all that are to come.*
 But, out of England, even then, there shone
 The first ethereal promise of the light

That crowns my master dead. Well I recall
 That day of days. There was no faintest breath
 Among his garden cypress-trees. They dreamed
 Dark, on a sky too beautiful for tears,
 And the first star was trembling overhead,
 When, quietly as a messenger from heaven,
 Moving unseen, through his own purer realm,
 Amongst the shadows of our mortal world,
 A young man, with a strange light on his face,
 Knocked at the door of Galileo's house.
 His name was Milton.

By the hand of God,
 He, the one living soul on earth with power
 To read the starry soul of this blind man,
 Was led through Italy to his prison door.
 He looked on Galileo, touched his hand . . .
*Oh, dark, dark, dark, amid the blaze of noon,
 Irrecoverably dark. . . .*

In after-days,
 He wrote it ; but it pulsed within him then ;
 And Galileo rising to his feet
 And turning on him those unseeing eyes
 That had searched heaven and seen so many worlds,
 Said to him, " You have found me."

Often he told me in those last sad months
 Of how your grave young island poet brought
 Peace to him, with the knowledge that, far off,
 In other lands, the truth he had proclaimed
 Was gathering power.

Soon after, death unlocked
 His prison, and the city that he loved,
 Florence, his town of flowers, whose gates in life
 He was forbid to pass, received him dead.

You write to me from England, that his name
 Is now among the mightiest in the world,
 And in his name I thank you.

I am old ;
 And I was very young when, long ago,
 I stood beside his poor dishonoured grave

Where hate denied him even an epitaph ;
 And I have seen, slowly and silently,
 His purer fame arising, like a moon
 In marble on the twilight of those aisles
 At Santa Croce, where the dread decree
 Was read against him.

Now, against two wrongs,
 Let me defend two victims : first, the Church
 Whom many have vilified for my master's doom ;
 And second, Galileo, whom they reproach
 Because they think that in his blind old age
 He might with one great eagle's glance have cowed
 His judges, played the hero, raised his hands
 Above his head, and posturing like a mummer
 Cried (as one empty rumour now declares)
 After his recantation—*yet, it moves !*
 Out of this wild confusion, fourfold wrongs
 Are heaped on both sides.—I would fain bring peace,
 The peace of truth to both before I die ;
 And, as I hope, rest at my master's feet.
 It was not Rome that tried to murder truth ;
 But the blind hate and vanity of man.
 Had Galileo but concealed the smile
 With which, like Socrates, he answered fools,
 They would not, in the name of Christ, have mixed
 This hemlock in his chalice.

O pitiful,
 Pitiful human hearts that must deny
 Their own unfolding heavens, for one light word
 Twisted by whispering malice.

Did he mean
 Simplicio, in his dialogues, for the Pope ?
 Doubtful enough—the name was borrowed straight
 From older dialogues.

If he gave one thought
 Of Urban's to Simplicio—you know well
 How composite are all characters in books,
 How authors find their colours here and there,
 And paint both saints and villains from themselves.
 No matter. This was Urban. Make it clear.
 Simplicio means a simpleton. The saints

Are roused by ridicule to most human wrath.
 Urban was once his friend. This hint of ours
 Kills all of that. And so we mortals close
 The doors of Love and Knowledge on the world.
 And so, for many an age, the name of Christ
 Has been misused by man to mask man's hate.
 How should the Church escape, then? I who loved
 My master, know he had no truer friend
 Than many of those true servants of the Church,
 Fathers and priests who, in their lowlier sphere,
 Moved nearer than her cardinals to the Christ.
 These were the very Rome, and held her keys.
 Those who charge Rome with hatred of the light
 Would charge the sun with darkness, and accuse
 This dome of sky for all the blood-red wrongs
 That men commit beneath it. Art and song
 That found her once in Europe their sole shrine
 And sanctuary absolve her from that stain.

But there's this other charge against my friend,
 And master, Galileo. It is brought
 By friends, made sharper by their pity and grief,
 The charge that he refused his martyrdom
 And so denied his own high faith.

Whose faith,—
 His friends', his Protestant followers', or his own?
 Faced by the torture, that sublime old man
 Was still a faithful Catholic, and his thought
 Plunged deeper than his Protestant followers knew.
 His aim was not to strike a blow at Rome
 But to confound his enemies. He believed
 As humbly as Castelli or Celeste
 That there is nothing absolute but that Power
 With which his Church confronted him. To this
 He bowed his head, acknowledging that his light
 Was darkness; but affirming, all the more,
 That Ptolemy's light was even darker yet.
 Read your own Protestant Milton, who derived
 His mighty argument from my master's lips:
*"Whether the sun predominant in heaven
 Rise on the earth, or earth rise on the sun;*

Leave them to God above ; Him serve and fear."

Just as in boyhood, when my master watched
The swinging lamp in the cathedral there
At Pisa ; and, by one finger on his pulse,
Found that, although the great bronze miracle swung
Through ever-shortening spaces, yet it moved
More slowly, and so still swung in equal times ;
He straight devised another boon to man,
Those pulse-clocks which by many a fevered bed
Our doctors use ; dreamed of that timepiece, too,
Whose punctual swinging pendulum on earth
Measures the starry periods, and to-day
Talks peacefully to children by the fire
Like an old grandad full of ancient tales,
Remembering endless ages, and foretelling
Eternities to come ; but, all the while
There, in the dim cathedral, he knew well,
That dreaming youngster, with his tawny mane
Of red-gold hair, and deep ethereal eyes,
What odorous clouds of incense round him rose ;
Was conscious in the dimness, of great throngs
Kneeling around him ; shared in his own heart
The music and the silence and the cry,
O salutaris hostia !—so now,
There was no mortal conflict in his mind
Between his dream-clocks and things absolute,
And one far voice, most absolute of all,
Feeble with suffering, calling night and day
“ *Return, return,*” the voice of his Celeste.
All these things co-existed, and the less
Were comprehended, like the swinging lamp,
Within that great cathedral of his soul.
Often he bade me, in that desolate house,
Il Giojello, of old a jewel of light,
Read to him one sad letter, till he knew
The most of it by heart, and while he walked
His garden, leaning on my arm, at times
I think he quite forgot that I was there ;
For he would quietly murmur it to himself,
As if she had sent it, half an hour ago :
“ Now, with this little winter’s gift of fruit

I send you, father, from our southward wall,
Our convent's rarest flower, a Christmas rose.
At this cold season, it should please you much,
Seeing how rare it is ; but, with the rose,
You must accept its thorns, which bring to mind
Our Lord's own bitter Passion. Its green leaves
Image the hope that through His Passion we,
After this winter of our mortal life,
May find the beauty of an eternal spring
In heaven."

Praise me the martyr, out of whose agonies
Some great new hope is born, but not the fool
Who starves his heart to prove what eyes can see
And intellect confirm throughout the world.
Why must he follow the idiot school-boy code,
Torture her soul to reinforce the sight
Of those that closed their eyes and would not see ?
To your own men of science, fifty turns
Of the thumbscrew would not prove that earth re-
volved.

Call it Italian subtlety if you will,
I say his intricate cause could not be won
By blind heroics. Much that his enemies challenged
Was not yet wholly proven, though his mind
Had leapt to a certainty. He must leave the rest
To those that should come after, swift and young,—
Those runners with the torch for whom he longed
As his deliverers. Had he chosen death
Before his hour, his proofs had been obscured
For many a year. His respite gave him time
To push new pawns out, in the blindfold play
Of those last months, and checkmate, not the Church
But those that hid behind her. He believed
His truth was all harmonious with her own.
How could he choose between them ? Must he die
To affirm a discord that himself denied ?
On many a point, he was less sure than we :
But surer far of much that we forget.
The movements that he saw he could but judge
By some fixed point in space. He chose the sun.
Could this be absolute ? Could he then be sure

That this great sun did not with all its worlds
Move round a deeper centre ? What became
Of your Copernicus then ? Could he be sure
Of any unchanging centre, whence to judge
This myriad-marching universe, but one—
The absolute throne of God.

Affirming this

Eternal Rock, his own uncertainties
Became more certain, and although his lips
Breathed not a syllable of it, though he stood
Silent as earth that also seemed so still,
The very silence thundered, *yet it moves !*
He held to what he knew, secured his work
Through feeble hands like mine, in other lands,
Not least in England, as I think you know.
For, partly through your poet, as I believe,
When his great music rolled upon your skies,
New thoughts were kindled in the general mind.
'Twas at Arcetri that your Milton gained
The first great glimpse of his celestial realm.
Picture him,—still a prisoner of our light,
Closing his glorious eyes—that in the dark
He might behold this wheeling universe,—
The planets gliding their ethereal horns
With sun-fire. Many a pure immortal phrase
In his own work, as I have pondered it,
Lived first upon the lips of him whose eyes
Were darkened first,—in whom, too, Milton found
That Samson Agonistes, not himself,
As many have thought, but my dear master dead.
These are a part of England's memories now,
The music blown upon her sea-bright air
When, in the year of Galileo's death,
Newton, the mightiest of the sons of light,
Was born to lift the splendour of this torch
And carry it, as I heard that Tycho said
Long since to Kepler, " Carry it out of sight,
Into the great new age I must not know,
Into the great new realm I must not tread,"

WILLIAM HERSCHEL CONDUCTS.

(From Volume I.)

*Was it a dream ?—that crowded concert-room
In Bath ; that sea of ruffles and laced coats ;
And William Herschel, in his powdered wig,
Waiting upon the platform to conduct
His choir and Linley's orchestra ? He stood
Tapping his music-rest, lost in his own thoughts,
And (did I hear or dream them ?) all were mine :*

My periwig's askew, my ruffle stained
With grease from my new telescope !

Ach, to-morrow

How Caroline will be vexed, although she grows
Almost as bad as I, who cannot leave
My workshop for one evening.

I must give

One last recital at St Margaret's,
And then—farewell to music.

Who can lead

Two lives at once ?

Yet—it has taught me much,
Thrown curious lights upon our world, to pass
From one life to another. Much that I took
For substance turns to shadow. I shall see
No throngs like this again ; wring no more praise
Out of their hearts ; forego that instant joy
—Let those who have not known it count it vain—
When human souls at once respond to yours.
Here, on the brink of fortune and of fame,
As men account these things, the moment comes
When I must choose between them and the stars ;
And I have chosen.

Handel, good old friend,
We part to-night. Hereafter, I must watch
That other wand, to which the worlds keep time.

What has decided me ? That marvellous night
When—ah, how difficult it will be to guide,
With all these wonders whirling through my brain—
After a Pump-room concert I came home
Hot-foot, out of the fluttering sea of fans,
Coquelicot-ribboned belles and periwigged beaux,
To my Newtonian telescope.

The design
Was his ; but more than half the joy my own,
Because it was the work of my own hand,
A new one, with an eye six inches wide,
Better than even the best that Newton made.
Then, as I turned it on the *Gemini*,
And the deep stillness of those constant lights,
Castor and Pollux, lucid pilot-stars,
Began to calm the fever of my blood,
I saw, oh, first of all mankind I saw
The disk of my new planet gliding there
Beyond our tumults, in that realm of peace.

What will they christen it ? Ach—not *Herschel*, no !
Nor *Georgium Sidus*, as I once proposed ;
Although he scarce could lose it, as he lost
That world in 'seventy-six.

Indeed, so far
From trying to tax it, he has granted me
How much ?—two hundred golden pounds a year,
In the great name of science,—half the cost
Of one state-coach, with all those worlds to win !
Well—well—we must be grateful. This mad king
Has done far more than all the worldly-wise,
Who'll charge even this to madness.

I believe
One day he'll have me pardoned for that . . . crime,
When I escaped—deserted, some would say—
From those drill-sergeants in my native land ;
Deserted drill for music, as I now

Desert my music for the orchestral spheres.
 No. This new planet is only new to man.
 His majesty has done much. Yet, as my friend
 Declared last night, "Never did monarch buy
 Honour so cheaply"; and—he has not bought it.
 I think that it should bear some ancient name,
 And wear it like a crown; some deep, dark name,
 Like *Uranus*, known to remoter gods.

How strange it seems—this buzzing concert-room!
 There's Doctor Burney bowing and, behind him,
 His fox-eyed daughter Fanny.

Is it a dream,

These crowding midgets, dense as clustering bees
 In some great bee-skep?

Now, as I lift my wand,

A silence grips them, and the strings begin
 Throbbing. The faint lights flicker in gusts of sound.
 Before me, glimmering like a crescent moon,
 The dim half circle of the choir awaits
 Its own appointed time.

Beside me now,

Watching my wand, plump and immaculate
 From buckled shoes to that white bunch of lace
 Under his chin, the midget tenor rises,
 Music in hand, a linnet and a king.
 The bullfinch bass, that other emperor,
 Leans back indifferently, and clears his throat
 As if to say, "This prelude leads to *Me!*"
 While on their own proud thrones, on either hand,
 The sumptuously bosomed midget queens,
 Contralto and soprano, jealously eye
 Each other's plumage.

Round me the music throbs

With an immortal passion. I grow aware
 Of an appalling mystery. . . . We, this throng
 Of midgets, playing, listening, tense and still,
 Are sailing on a midget ball of dust
 We call our planet; will have sailed through space
 Ten thousand leagues before this music ends.
 What does it mean? O God, what *can* it mean?—

This weird hushed ant-hill with a thousand eyes ;
 These midget periwigs ; all those little blurs,
 Tier over tier, of faces, masks of flesh,
 Corruptible, hiding each its hopes and dreams,
 Its tragi-comic dreams.

And all this throng
 Will be forgotten, mixed with dust, crushed out,
 Before this book of music is outworn
 Or that tall organ crumbles. Violins
 Outlast their players. Other hands may touch
 That harpsichord ; but ere this planet makes
 Another threescore journeys round its sun,
 These breathing listeners will have vanished.

Whither ?

I watch my moving hands, and they grow strange !
 What is it moves this body ? What am I ?
 How came I here, a ghost, to hear that voice
 Of infinite compassion, far away,
 Above the throbbing strings, hark ! *Comfort ye . . .*

If music lead us to a cry like this,
 I think I shall not lose it in the skies.
 I do but follow its own secret law
 As long ago I sought to understand
 Its golden mathematics ; taught myself
 The way to lay one stone upon another,
 Before I dared to dream that I might build
 My Holy City of Song. I gave myself
 To all its branches. How they stared at me,
 Those men of " sensibility," when I said
 That algebra, conic sections, fluxions, all
 Pertained to music. Let them stare again.
 Old Kepler knew, by instinct, what I now
 Desire to learn. I have resolved to leave
 No tract of heaven unvisited.

To-night,

—The music carries me back to it again !—
 I see beyond this island universe,
 Beyond our sun, and all those other suns
 That throng the Milky Way, far, far beyond,
 A thousand little wisps, faint *nebulæ*,

Luminous fans and milky streaks of fire ;
 Some like soft brushes of electric mist
 Streaming from one bright point ; others that spread
 And branch, like growing systems ; others discrete,
 Keen, ripe, with stars in clusters ; others drawn back
 By central forces into one dense death,
 Thence to be kindled into fire, reborn,
 And scattered abroad once more in a delicate spray
 Faint as the mist by one bright dewdrop breathed
 At dawn, and yet a universe like our own ;
 Each wisp a universe, a vast galaxy
 Wide as our night of stars.

The Milky Way

In which our sun is drowned, to these would seem
 Less than to us their faintest drift of haze ;
 Yet we, who are borne on one dark grain of dust
 Around one indistinguishable spark
 Of star-mist, lost in one lost feather of light,
 Can by the strength of our own thought, ascend
 Through universe after universe ; trace their growth
 Through boundless time, their glory, their decay ;
 And, on the invisible road of law, more firm
 Than granite, range through all their length and
 breadth,
 Their height and depth, past, present, and to come.
 So, those who follow the great Work-master's law
 From small things up to great, may one day learn
 The structure of the heavens, discern the whole
 Within the part, as men through Love see God.

Oh, holy night, deep night of stars, whose peace
 Descends upon the troubled mind like dew,
 Healing it with the sense of that pure reign
 Of constant law, enduring through all change ;
 Shall I not, one day, after faithful years,
 Find that thy heavens are built on music, too,
 And hear, once more, above thy throbbing worlds
 This voice of all compassion, *Comfort ye,—*
Yes—comfort ye, my people, saith your God ?

AVICENNA'S DREAM.

(From Volume II.)

BUT all these books—for him—were living thoughts,
 Clues to the darker Book of Nature's law ;
 For, when he climbed, a goat-foot boy, in Spring
 Up through the savage Hissar range, he saw
 A hundred gorges thundering at his feet
 With snow-fed cataracts ; torrents whose fierce flight
 Uprooted forests, tore great boulders down,
 Ground the huge rocks together ; and every year
 Channelled raw gullies and swept old scars away ;
 So that the wildered eagle beating up
 To seek his last year's eyry, found that all
 Was new and strange ; and even the tuft of pines
 That used to guide him to his last year's nest
 Had vanished from the crags he knew no more.

There, pondering on the changes of the world,
 Young Avicenna, with a kinglier eye,
 Saw in the lapse of ages the great hills
 Melting away like waves ; and, from the sea,
 New lands arising ; and the whole dark earth
 Dissolving, and reshaping all its realms
 Around him, like a dream.

Thus of his hills
 And of their high snows flowing through his thoughts
 Was born the tale that afterwards was told
 By golden-tongued Kazwini, and wafted thence
 Through many lands, from Tartary to Pameer.
 For, cross-legged, in the shadow of a palm,
 The hawk-eyed teller of tales, in years unborn
 Holding his wild clan spellbound, would intone

The deep melodious legend, flowing thus,
As all the world flows, through the eternal mind.

I came one day upon an ancient City.
I saw the long white crescent of its wall
Stained with thin peach-blood, blistered by the sun.

I saw beyond it, clustering in the sky,
Ethereal throngs of ivory minarets,
Tall slender towers, each crowned with one bright
pearl.

It was no desert phantom ; for it grew
And sharpened as I neared it, till I saw,
Under the slim carved windows in the towers,
The clean-cut shadows, forked and black and small
Like clinging swallows.

In the midst up-swam
The Sultan's palace with its faint blue domes,
The moons of morning.

Wreaths of frankincense
Floated around me as I entered in.
A thousand thousand warrior faces thronged
The glimmering streets. Blood-rubies burned like
stars
In shadowy silks and turbans of all hues.

The markets glowed with costly merchandise.
I saw proud stallions, pacing to and fro
Before the rulers of a hundred kings.
I saw, unrolled beneath the slender feet
Of slave-girls white as April's breathing snow,
Soft prayer-rugs of a subtler drift of bloom
Than flows with sunset over the blue and grey
And opal of the drifting desert sand.

Princes and thieves, philosophers and fools
Jostled together, among hot scents of musk.
Dark eyes were flashing. Blood throbbed darker yet.
Lean dusky fingers groped for hilts of jade.
Then, with a roll of drums, through Eastern gates,

Out of the dawn, and softer than its clouds,
Tall camels, long tumultuous caravans,
Like stately ships, came slowly stepping in,
Loaded with shining plunder from Cathay.
I turned and asked my neighbour in the throng
Who built that city, and how long ago.
He stared at me in wonder. "It is old,
Older than any memory," he replied.
"Nor can our father's oldest legend tell
Who built so great a city."

I went my way.

And in a thousand ages I returned,
And found not even a stone of that great City,
Not even a shadow of all that lust and pride.
But only an old peasant gathering herbs
Where once it stood, upon the naked plain.

"What wars destroyed it, and how long ago?"
I asked him. Slowly lifting his grey head,
He stared at me in wonder.

"This bleak land
Was always thus. Our bread was always black
And our wine harsh. It is a bitter wind
That scourges us. But where these nettles grew
Nettles have always grown. Nothing has changed
In mortal memory here."

"Was there not, once,
A mighty City," I said, "with shining streets,
Here, on this ground?" I spoke with bated breath.
He shook his head and smiled, the pitying smile
That wise men use to poets and to fools.—
"Our fathers never told us of that city.
Doubtless it was a dream."

I went my way.

And in a thousand ages I returned;
And, where the plain was, I beheld the sea.
The sea-gulls mewed and pounced upon their prey.
The brown-legged fishermen crouched upon the shore,
Mending their tarry nets.

I asked how long
That country had been drowned beneath the waves.

They mocked at me. " His wits are drowned in wine.
 Tides ebb and flow, and fishes leap ashore ;
 But all our harvest, since the first wind blew,
 Swam in deep waters. Are not wrecks washed up
 With coins that none can use, because they bear
 The blind old images of forgotten kings ?
 The waves have shaped these cliffs, dug out these
 caves,
 Rounded each agate on this battered beach.
 How long ? Ask earth, ask heaven. Nothing has
 changed.
 The sea was always here."—

I went my way.

And in a thousand ages I returned.
 The sea had vanished. Where the ships had sailed
 Warm vineyards basked, among the enfolding hills.
 I saw, below me, on the winding road,
 Two milk-white oxen, under a wooden yoke,
 Drawing a waggon, loaded black with grapes.
 Beside them walked a slim brown-ankled girl.
 I stood beneath a shadowy wayside oak
 To watch them. They drew near.

It was no dream.

Blood of the grape upon the wrinkled throats
 And smoking flanks of the oxen told me this.
 I saw the branching veins and satin skin
 Twitch at the flickering touch of a fly. I saw
 The knobs of brass that sheathed their curling horns,
 The moist black muzzles.

Like many whose coats are white,

Their big dark eyes had mists of blue.

Their breath

Was meadows newly mown.

By all the gods

That ever wrung man's heart out in the grave,
 I did not dream this life into the world.—
 Blood of the grape upon the girl's brown arms
 And lean, young, bird-like fingers told me this.
 Her smooth feet powdered by the warm grey dust ;
 The grape-stalk that she held in her white teeth ;

Her mouth a redder rose than Omar knew ;
Her eyes, dark pools where stars could shine by day ;
These were no dream. And yet,—

“ How long ago,”

I asked her, “ did the bitter sea withdraw
Its foam from all your happy sun-burnt hills ? ”
She looked at me in fear. Then, with a smile,
She answered, “ Nothing here has ever changed.
My father's father, in his childhood, played
Among these vines. That oak-tree where you stand
Had lived a century, then. The parent oak
From which its acorn dropped had long been dead.
But hills are hills. I never saw the sea.
Nothing has ever changed.”

I went my way.

Last, in a thousand ages I returned,
And found, once more, a City, thronged and tall,
More rich, more marvellous even than the first ;
A City of pride and lust and gold and grime,
A City of clustering domes and stately towers,
And temples where the great new gods might dwell.
But, turning to a citizen in the gates,
I asked who built it and how long ago.
He stared at me as wise men stare at fools ;
Then, pitying the afflicted, he replied
Gently, as to a child :

“ The City is old,
Older than all our histories. Its birth
Is lost among the impenetrable mists
That shroud the most remote antiquity.
None knows, nor can our oldest legends tell
Who built so great a City.”

I went my way.

EPILOGUE.

(From Volume II.)

Up the Grand Canyon the full morning flowed.
 I heard the voices moving through the abyss
 With the deep sound of pine-woods, league on league
 Of singing boughs, each separate, each a voice,
 Yet all one music ;

The Eternal Mind
Enfolds all changes, and can never change.

*Man is not exiled from this Majesty,
 The inscrutable Reality, which he shares
 In his immortal essence. Man that doubts
 All but the sensuous veils of colour and sound,
 The appearances that he can measure and weigh,
 Trusts, as the very fashioner of his doubt,
 The imponderable thought that weighs the worlds,
 The invisible thought that sees ; thought that reveals
 The miracle of the eternal paradox—
 The pure unsearchable Being that cannot be
 Yet Is, and still creates and governs all ;
 A Power that, being Unknowable, is best known ;
 For His transcendent Being can reply
 To every agony, " I am that which waits
 Beyond the last horizon of your pain,
 Beyond your wildest hope, your last despair,
 Above your heaven, and deeper than your hell.
 There is not room on earth for what ye seek.
 Is there not room in Me ? "*

Time is a shadow
*Of man's own thought. Things past and things to come
 Are closed in His full circle. He lives and reigns ;*

*Dies with the dying bird ; and, in its death
 Receives it to His heart. No leaf can fall
 Without Him ; who, for ever pouring out
 His passion into worlds that shall attain
 Love in the highest at last, returns for ever
 Along these roads of suffering and of death,
 With all their lives upgathered to His heart
 Into the heaven of heavens. How else could life
 Lay hold on its infinitude, or win
 The strength to walk with Love in complete light ?
 For, as a child that learns to walk on earth,
 Life learns these little rhythms of earthly law,
 Listens to simple seas that ebb and flow,
 And spells the large bright order of the stars
 Wherein the moving Reason is revealed
 To man's up-struggling mind, or breathed like song
 Into the quiet heart, as love to love.
 So, step by step, the spirit of man ascends
 Through joy and grief ; and is withdrawn by death
 From the sweet dust that might content it here,
 Into His kingdom, the one central goal
 Of the universal agony. He lives.
 He lives and reigns, throned above space and time ;
 And, in that realm, freedom and law are one ;
 Fore-knowledge and all-knowledge and free-will,
 Make everlasting music.*

Far away
 Along the unfathomable abyss it flowed,
 A harmony so consummate that it shared
 The silence of the sky ; a song so deep
 That only the still soul could hear it now :
*New every morning the creative Word
 Moves upon chaos. Yea, our God grows young.
 Here, now, the eternal miracle is renewed.
 Now, and for ever, God makes heaven and earth.*

A NEW CAROL

SING you in the dark sky,
 Or sing you in the snow,
 With stars in your lanthorns
 That swing as you go—

Gloria, gloria,

In excelsis gloria—

Sing you of the world's Light
 That died so long ago ?

Through the darkened window
 Steals the lesser light.

Sing you but as waits may

Or angels in the height,—

Gloria, gloria,

In excelsis gloria—

Still the eternal splendour
 Is folded in our night.

Come you through the ages

Across the world's flow,

Through the mind's dominions,

Or trudging through the snow—

Gloria, gloria,

In excelsis gloria !—

In our grief He hideth

As long and long ago.

SERO TE AMAVI.

THE ways of earth are not her ways.
There is not any land
Where you shall see her face
Or touch her hand.

Yet she is ever near, so near
That, even in this loud mart,
At times I think I hear
Her beating heart ;

Beating and breaking, night and day,
Patient as heretofore,
Before we chose our way
And closed the door.

APPEARANCE AND REALITY.

In those great realms of light—

From which our rounded skies, the wide, the deep,
Seem but a small dark cloud, a sphere of night

Where embryonic lives are drowned in sleep—
They that were born through death

To life at last, and have stripped off all dreams,
Draw with new joy their deep untroubled breath,
Walk on firm ground, and swim in living streams.

We are the ghosts, not they ;

Ghosts with a cheating cloud-wrack round us furled.
Theirs is the substance ; theirs the shining day ;

Theirs are the ringing highroads of the world ;
Theirs the strong hills to range ;

Valleys of Beauty ; bare scarred rocks of Truth ;
Theirs the full life that uses time and change
To wing with music an eternal youth.

Theirs the great company, too,

The century-peopled cities, the world's boast ;
Ours the dark dwellings ; ours an earth-bound few ;

Theirs is the central, universal host.

And when we too are born,

And join that general concourse of mankind ;
When these blind gates burst open to that morn,
And these blind eyes perceive that they were blind ;

When this dream-burial ends,

And all the sensuous veils of colour and sound
That will not let us near our unseen friends
From our true selves like cere-cloths are unwound ;

In the first wonder and awe,
When the dread seals are shattered and we see
Light beyond light, freedom at one with law,
Thought, passion, will, one absolute harmony ;

Oh, what shall be our clue,
On our first waking, to that exquisite maze ?
One living truth that even on earth we knew
In human form shall meet our wildered gaze ;
A voice ; a living hand ;
The known transfiguring all that vast unknown ;
Then the full memory ; eyes that understand ;
And the inarticulate love that claims its own.

JOURNEY'S END.

KNOW'ST thou where that kingdom lies ?
 Take no lanthorn in thy hand.
 Search not the unfathomed skies.
 Journey not o'er sea and land.
 Grope no more to east or west.
 Heaven is locked within thy breast.

Splendours of the sun grow dim,
 Stars are darkened by that light.
 Thoughts that burn like seraphim
 Throng thine inner world to-night.
 Set thy heel on Death and find
 Love, new-born, within thy mind.

In that kingdom folded lie
 All that eyes believe they see ;
 All the hues of earth and sky,
 Time, space, and eternity.
 Seek no more in realms apart.
 Heaven is folded in thy heart.

BEAUTIFUL ON THE BOUGH.

BEAUTIFUL on the bough
 The song-thrush in summer-time
 Carelessly sings.

Beautiful under the bough
 The silent thrush in winter-time
 Lies with stiffened wings.

Who, ah, who, shall sing or say
 Why there comes to careless-hearted joy
 A thing so still and great as death ?

If the gods feared that happiness would cloy,
 Surely a slighter sadness would repay
 That little debt,

That debt of harmless gladness !
 Why must the lightest creature that draws breath
 Go down this tragic way,

Assume the awful majesty of a fate
 Worthy a god ; if it were not . . . God, Christ,
 Return, return, Compassionate,

We have rejected Thee,
 Who saidst that not one should be sacrificed,
 We have rejected Thee, but not the fact,

This terrible naked fact, which if it be
 Unanswered, blackens earth and sky and sea . . .
 This tiny body, mocking the blind sun,
 Postulates Thy divine philosophy,—
 Not one shall fall to the earth, not one, not one.

AS WE FORGIVE.

BEFORE Thy children, Lord, were fully grown,
 They bowed like suppliants at their Maker's throne
 And prayed, like slaves, that mercy might be shown.

They knelt before Thee, pleading in the night,
 That Thou wouldst wash their scarlet raiment white.
 Now, in the dawn, at last they stand upright.

Not with irreverent hearts, yet unafraid,
 The silent helpless myriads Thou hast made,
 Give Thee the gifts for which, of old, they prayed :

Compassion for the burden Thou must bear ;
 And, though they know not why these evils were,
 Their mute forgiveness for the griefs they share.

Yes, for one human grief that still must be
 Too sad for heaven, too tragical for Thee,
 Who even in death wast sure of victory ;

For those farewells that darken our brief day,
 The child struck down, the young love torn away,
 And those dear hopes that kiss us to betray ;

For perishing youth, for beauty's fading eyes ;
 For all Thyself hast given us in such wise
 That, ere we grasp its loveliness, it dies,

Dies and, despite our faith, we are not sure.
 Our love, O God, was never so secure
 As Thine, in Thy strong heaven which must endure.

So, in our human weakness, for the scorn
And scourging, for the bitter cross of thorn
That this dark earth, from age to age has borne,

We—Thy clay creatures—warped and marred and blind,
Stretch out our arms at last, and bid Thee find
Rest to Thy soul, in crucified mankind.

Come to us ! Leave Thy deathless realms on high.
We tell Thee, as our dumb dark myriads die,
We do absolve Thee, with our last sad cry.

THE BLINDED SOLDIER TO HIS LOVE.

I DID not know you then.
 I cannot see you now ;
 But let my hands again
 Feel your sweet hair and brow.
 Your eyes are grey, I am told,
 Your hair a tawny gold.

Yet, if of these I tire,
 I shall not need to stray.
 Your eyes shall feed my fire
 With brown or blue for grey ;
 And your deep hair shall be
 As mutable as the sea.

Let forms and colours flow
 Like clouds around a star.
 I clasp the soul and know
 How vain those day-dreams are ;
 Dreams, from these eyes withdrawn
 Beyond all hope of dawn.

But what is dawn to me ?
 In Love's Arabian night,
 What lover cares to see
 The unwelcome morning light ?
 With you, O sweetest friend,
 My night shall never end.

A VICTORY DANCE.¹

THE cymbals crash,
 And the dancers walk,
 With long silk stockings
 And arms of chalk,
 Butterfly skirts,
 And white breasts bare,
And shadows of dead men
Watching 'em there.

Shadows of dead men
Stand by the wall,
Watching the fun
Of the Victory Ball.
They do not reproach,
Because they know,
If they're forgotten,
It's better so.

Under the dancing
 Feet are the graves.
 Dazzle and motley,
 In long bright waves,
 Brushed by the palm-fronds
 Grapple and whirl
 Ox-eyed matron,
 And slim white girl.

¹ This poem is not an attack on one of the most graceful of the arts, but was suggested by one particular method of celebrating the last hour of the world's Calvary.

Fat wet bodies
 Go waddling by,
 Girdled with satin,
 Though God knows why ;
 Gripped by satyrs
 In white and black,
 With a fat wet hand
 On the fat wet back.

See, there is one child
 Fresh from school,
 Learning the ropes
 As the old hands rule.
 God, how the dead men
 Chuckle again,
 As she begs for a dose
 Of the best cocaine.

" What did you think
 We should find," said a shade,
 " When the last shot echoed
 And peace was made ? "
 " Christ," laughed the fleshless
 Jaws of his friend,
 " I thought they'd be praying
 For worlds to mend,

" Making earth better,
 Or something silly,
 Like whitewashing hell
 Or Piccadilly.
 They've a sense of humour,
 These women of ours,
 These exquisite lilies,
 These fresh young flowers ! "

" Pish," said a statesman
 Standing near,
 " I'm glad they can busy
 Their thoughts elsewhere !

We mustn't reproach 'em.
They're young, you see."
"Ah," said the dead men,
"So were we!"

Victory! Victory!
On with the dance!
Back to the jungle
The new beasts prance!
God, how the dead men
Grin by the wall,
Watching the fun
Of the Victory Ball.

THE WOOD-CUTTER.

As I walked through a fir-wood
 Where wild pigeons croon,
 I found a deep glen
 That was old as the moon ;
 And, deep in its midnight
 Of gorse and thick fern,
 I beheld a low lanthorn
 Like a harvest moon burn.

Then, for leagues I groped down
 By wild rocks and dark streams,
 Over fir-roots and tree-ferns,
 Led straight by its gleams ;
 Till at last, by that lanthorn,
 And still as a stone,
 I discerned an old wood-cutter
 Standing alone.

And I crept nigh, and saw
 From the edge of that glow,
 That his face was like wisdom,
 His elf-locks like snow ;
 And his eyes like black magic,
 That sleeps in deep wells,
 With a deeper night under
 Where mystery dwells.

And his mouth had the strength
 That has conquered desire ;
 And the axe on his shoulder
 Was whiter than fire ;

And he breathed, very softly,
Like a deep sea at rest,
A rune from the lost woods
That Merlin loved best.

I hear the grass growing.
I hear the leaves fall.
I hear the years flowing,
And heed not at all.
I hear the far changes
Of seasons and tides.
I am waiting, still waiting ;
For hope still abides.

Then he lifted his lanthorn,
He swung it on high ;
And it lit a great tree,
Looming up through the sky,
With its opal-skinned clusters
In darkness impearled,
A bright fruitage of stars,
The great tree of the world.

He lowered his lanthorn ;
And now I could see
A deep gash, like a cave,
At the roots of the tree ;
So deep that I trembled
Lest even a breath
Should send that proud Igdrasil
Crashing to death.

And the woodman breathed low,—
Does the judgment draw nigh ?
I am waiting, still waiting
One word from on high.

*Are they eaten with cankers ?
Is it poisonous fruit ?
It will need but one stroke
Of mine axe at the root.*

*Have they trampled all beauty
And truth into dust ?
Have they choked their own souls
With their greed and their lust ?
One stroke, and my Master
Were freed of this pain,
Since His worlds of free-will
Will His work to be vain.*

Then I saw the gaunt woodman,
Like Azrael, arise
As he heaved the great haft
Of his axe to the skies.
It was moved by sure laws.
Every lie in the night,
Every wrong in the sun,
Swung the axe to its height.

By the laws in whose service
All creatures are free,
Its might was upraised
As the moon lifts the sea.
Then the night held its breath,
And above the world-oak
The blade—ah, how slowly !—
Swung back for the stroke.

There was only one whisper
Of time dying out.
Yet the doomsman still waited,
Still paused, as in doubt ;

A sigh of great ages
That ebb'd with the tides.
He is waiting, still waiting,
For hope still abides.

No mercy can stay him.
He obeys, in his power,
Not the judgment of heaven
Or the whim of an hour ;
No strength can delay him,
No godhead controls,
But the strength of the victims,
The choice of their souls.

THE TRUE REBELLION.

LET the wild throng go paint themselves with woad,
 For we've a jest between us, Truth and I.
 We know that those who live by fashion die
 Also by fashion, and that mode kills mode.
 We know the great new age is on the road,
 And death is at the heart of every lie.
 But we've a jest between us, Truth and I ;
 And we have locked the doors to our abode.

Yet if some great new " rebel " in his pride
 Should pass that way and hear us laughing low
 Like lovers, in the darkness, side by side,
 He might catch this :—*The dullards do not know
 That names are names. New " rebel " is old " thrall."*
And we're the lonely dreamers after all.

THE ANVIL.

STAND like a beaten anvil, when thy dream
Is laid upon thee, golden from the fire.
Flinch not, though heavily through that furnace-gleam
The black forge-hammers fall on thy desire.

Demoniac giants round thee seem to loom.
'Tis but the world-smiths heaving to and fro.
Stand like a beaten anvil. Take the doom
Their ponderous weapons deal thee, blow on blow.

Needful to truth as dew-fall to the flower
Is this wild wrath and this implacable scorn.
For every pang, new beauty, and new power,
Burning blood-red shall on thy heart be born.

Stand like a beaten anvil. Let earth's wrong
Beat on that iron and ring back in song.

THE GYPSY.

THERE was a barefoot gypsy-girl
 Came walking from the West,
 With a little naked sorrow
 Drinking beauty at her breast.
 Her breast was like the young moon ;
 Her eyes were dark and wild.
 She was like evening when she wept,
 And morning when she smiled.

The little corners of her mouth
 Were innocent and wise ;
 And men would listen to her words,
 And wonder at her eyes ;
 And, since she walked with wounded feet,
 And utterly alone,
 It seemed as if the women, too,
 Would make her grief their own.

Ah, had she been an old hag
 With shrivelled flesh and brain,
 They would have drawn her to their hearts
 And eased her of her pain ;
 But, since her smooth-skinned loveliness
 Could only hurt their pride,
 They dipped their pins in poison ;
 And, by accident, she died.

THE DEATH OF A GREAT MAN.

No—not that he is dead. The pang's not there,
 Nor in the City's many-coloured bloom
 Of swift black-lettered posters, which the throng
 Passes with bovine stare,
 To say *He is dead* and *Is it going to rain?*
 Or hum stray snatches of a rag-time song.
 Nor is it in that falsest shibboleth
 (Which orators toss to the dumb scorn of death)
 That all the world stands weeping at his tomb.
 London is dining, dancing, through it all.
 And, in the unchecked smiles along the street
 Where men, that slightly knew him, lightly meet,
 With all the old indifferent grimaces,
 There is no jot of grief, no tittle of pain.
 No. No. For nearer things do most tears fall.
 Grief is for near and little things. But pride,
 Oh, pride was to be found by two or three,
 And glory in his great battling memory,
 Prouder and purer than the loud world knows,
 In one more dreadful sign, the day he died—
 The dreadful light upon a thousand faces,
 The peace upon the faces of his foes.

THE GREY SPRING.

I SAW the green Spring
Wading the brooks
With wild jay laughter
And hoyden looks.

I saw the grey Spring.
Weeping alone
Where woods are misty
And buds unblown.

Red were the lips
Whence laughter leapt ;
But oh, it was Beauty
Herself that wept.

THE MAKING OF A POEM.

LAST night a passionate tempest shook his soul
With hatred and black anger and despair,
And the dark depths and every foaming shoal
Ran wild as if they fought with the blind air.

Now, on a morning sky of stainless blue,
The clouds of Spring their crisp white sails unfurl ;
And, on the shore, in colours rich and new,
The strange green seas cast up their loosened pearl.

RAIN AT SUNSET.

LUCID arrows of delight, rose-feathered and moon-white,
Shoot from an irised bow
Round the fern-fringed wood, making little pools of light
Where the wild white violets grow.

Lift up your face, lift up that rain-kissed flower,
And show how tears can shine ;
Eyes, lips, and hair that change the clinging mist of the
shower,
By miracle, into wine.

Now, as the cloud passes, in the clear hush after the rain,
And the green boughs drip with the sky,
Let the whole earth, while the thrush makes merry
again,
Fade into our joy and die.

AFTER RAIN.

· LISTEN ! On sweetening air
The blackbird growing bold
Flings out, where green boughs glisten,
Three splashes of wild gold.

Daughter of April, hear !
And sing, O barefoot boy !
That carol of wild sweet water
Has washed the world with joy.

Glisten, O fragrant earth,
Assoiled by heaven anew,
And O, ye lovers, listen,
With eyes that glisten, too.

THE CLEAR MAY.

I SAW once a clear May, was in a dark garden,
 Liltng for joy to the babe at her breast,
 “ *Lullay, my little one ; oh, lullay, my darling ;*
Earth is in tumult, but heaven is at rest.

“ Herod hath crushed out the grapes of the wine-press.
 Proud ride the emperors to slaughter their fill.
Lullay, my little one ; the green leaves are growing ;
Earth is in torment, but the stars are so still !

“ Music,” said my May to me, “ music surroundeth us,
 Whatsoever agonies entangle our feet !
Though the sun die, and the stars leave their courses,
Heaven moveth round them in a music most sweet.

“ Therefore I sing,” she said, “ I too sing *Magnificat*,
 Caught up, as one voice, in that choir of delight ;
 For heaven hath stooped down to be clothed with our
 weakness
 And looked through the eyes of a child in our night.”

So darkly she sang, as that bird of old legend,
 The bird whose warm breast was pierced through by a
 thorn,
Lullay, my little one, oh, lullay, my darling,
Out of earth's anguish our heaven is reborn.

SHADOW-OF-A-LEAF.

ELF-BLOODED creature, little did he reck
 Of this blind world's delights,
 Content to wreathe his legs around his neck
 For warmth on winter nights ;
 Content to ramble away
 Through his deep woods in May ;
 Content, alone with Pan, to observe his forest rites.

Or, cutting a dark cross of beauty there
 All out of a hawthorn-tree,
 He'd set it up, and whistle to praise and prayer,
 Field-mouse and finch and bee ;
 And, as the woods grew dim
 Brown squirrels knelt with him,
 Paws to blunt nose, and prayed as well as he.

For, all his wits being lost, he was more wise
 Than aught on earthly ground.
 Like haunted woodland pools his great dark eyes
 Where the lost stars were drowned,
 Saw things afar and near.
 'Twas said that he could hear
 That music of the sphere which hath no sound.

And so, through many an age and many a clime,
 He strayed on unseen wings ;
 For he was fey, and knew not space or time,
 Kingdoms or earthly kings.
 Clear as a crystal ball
 One dew-drop showed him all,—
 Earth and its tribes, and strange translunar things.

But to the world's one May, he made in chief
His lonely woodland vow,
Praying—as none could pray but Shadow-of-a-Leaf,
Under that fresh-cut bough
Which with two branches grew,
Dark, dark, in sun and dew,—
“The world goes maying. Be this my maypole now !

“Make me a garland, Lady, in thy green aisles
For this wild rood of may,
And I will make thee another of tears and smiles
To match thine own, this day.
For every rose thereof
A rose of my heart's love,
A blood-red rose that shall not waste away.

“For every violet here, a gentle thought
To worship at thine eyes ;
But, most of all, for wildings few have sought,
And careless looks despise,
For ragged-robins' birth
Here, in a ditch of earth,
A tangle of sweet prayers to thy pure skies.”

*Bird, squirrel, bee, and the thing that was like no other
Played in the woods that day,
Talked in the heart of the woods, as brother to brother,
And prayed as children pray,—
Make me a garland, Lady, a garland, Mother,
For this wild rood of may.*

FEY JOAN.

SHE stood in the dark, where the crab-apples blow,
 And told her own fortune for no man to know,
 Crooning low to the bloom on a dew-dabbled spray
 As, petal by petal, she plucked it away :

“ Wonder and wonder,
 And wonder again !
 This for the beauty,
 And this for the pain !
 This for the big star
 That shines through the tree ;
 But all for the love
 That gave Robin to me.”

She crooned like an elf that is drunk with the dew,
 To a melody sweeter than earth ever knew ;
 Then she swayed like a fern at the flight of a wing,
 And warbled aloud like an ouzel in Spring :

“ Wonder and wonder,
 And wonder again !
 This for the nest
 In the dark of the lane !
 This for the home
 That I never shall see ;
 But all for the love
 That gave Robin to me.”

She touched her red mouth to the lips of a flower,
 And she breathed in her pain (it was nigh to her hour) ;
 “ Oh, one kiss for happiness, one kiss for tears,
 And one for old age that must come with the years.

Wonder and wonder,
And wonder again !
This for grey Scotland,
And this for brown Spain !
This for the tall ship
That walked the wide sea ;
But all, all for love
That gave Robin to me."

THE STRANGE GUEST.

You cannot leave a new house
With any open door,
But a strange guest will enter it
And never leave it more.

Build it on a waste land,
Dreary as a sin.
Leave her but a broken gate,
And Beauty will come in.

Build it all of scarlet brick.
Work your wicked will.
Dump it on an ash-heap,
Then—O then, be still.

Sit and watch your new house
Leave an open door.
A strange guest will enter it
And never leave it more.

She will make your raw wood
Mellower than gold.
She will take your new lamps
And sell them for old.

She will crumble all your pride,
Break your folly down.
Much that you rejected
She will bless and crown.

She will rust your naked roof,
Split your pavement through,
Dip her brush in sun and moon
And colour it anew.

Leave her but a window
Wide to wind and rain,
You shall find her footsteps
When you come again.

Though she keep you waiting
Many months or years,
She shall stain and make it
Beautiful with tears.

She shall hurt and heal it,
Soften it and save,
Blessing it, until it stand
Stronger than the grave.

*You cannot leave a new house
With any open door,
But a strange guest will enter it
And never leave it more.*

THE VISITANT.

BEAUTY forsakes her sky
 And wakes, a changeling, in our realm of night ,
 Love, in immortal ecstasy,
 Dies, to be born in worlds of fading light ;
 For, breathing mortal breath,
 They win their heaven at last, and conquer death.

From worlds too great to grasp,
 They turn to all these dear small mortal things.
 With dying mortal hands they clasp
 A mortal hand, a small warm hand that clings ;
 Knowing that those who fold
 Love to their hearts have more than heaven to hold.

They dwell in man's dark mind
 Lest absolute light should melt their lives like dew ;
 And sight of all things leave them blind,
 Even to the faces and the flowers they knew.
 They look through mortal eyes
 To save their souls from those unbounded skies.

So Merlin taught me well
 Long since, in those old morning-coloured woods,
 To see the moment's miracle,
 And how all beauty in one may-tree broods,
 And heaven is brought to birth
 Only through lesser heavens that walk on earth.

THE SHINING STREETS OF LONDON.

Now, in the twilight, after rain
 The wet black street shines out again ;
 And, softening through the coloured gloom,
 The lamps like burning tulips bloom.

Now, lighted shops, down aisles of mist,
 Smoulder in gold and amethyst ;
 And paved with fragments of the skies
 Our sooty town like Venice lies.

For, streaked with tints of cloud and moon,
 The tides of a bewitched lagoon
 Into the solid squares we know
 And round the shadowy minster flow ;

Till even that emperor of the street,
 The bluff policeman on his beat,
 Reflected there with portly pride
 From boots to helmet, floats enskied.

Now every woman's face is fair,
 And Cockney lovers walk on air,
 And every road, in broken gleams,
 Mirrors a travelling throng of dreams.

Like radiant galleons, lifting high
 Their scutcheoned prows against the sky,
 With lamps that near you, blazing white,
 Or dwine in crimson through the night,

Busses (with coloured panes that spill
A splash of cherry or daffodil)
And lighted faces, row on row,
From darkness into darkness go.

*O Love, what need have you and I
Of vine and palm and azure sky.
And who would sail for Greece or Rome
When such a highway leads him home?*

SUNLIGHT AND SEA.

GIVE me the sunlight and the sea,
And who shall take my heaven from me ?

Light of the Sun, Life of the Sun,
O, happy bold companion
Whose golden laughs round me run,
Making wine of the blue air
With wild-rose kisses everywhere,
Browning the limb, flushing the cheek,
Apple-fragrant, leopard-sleek,
Dancing from thy red-curtained East
Like a nautch-girl to my feast,
Proud, because her lord the Spring,
Praised the way those anklets ring ;
Or wandering like a white Greek maid
Leaf-dappled through the dancing shade
Where many a green-veined leaf imprints
Breast and limb with emerald tints,
That softly net her silken shape,
But let the splendour still escape,
While rosy ghosts of roses flow
Over the supple rose and snow.

But sweetest, fairest is thy face,
When we meet, when we embrace,
Where the white sand sleeps at noon
Round that lonely blue lagoon,
Fringed with one white reef of coral
Where the sea-birds faintly quarrel

And the breakers on the reef
Fade into a dream of grief,
And the palm-trees overhead
Whisper that all grief is dead.

Sister Sunlight, lead me then
Into thy healing seas again——
For when we swim out, side by side,
Like a lover with his bride,
When thy lips are salt with brine,
And thy wild eyes flash in mine,
The music of a mightier sea
Beats with my blood in harmony.
I breast the primal flood of being,
Too clear for speech, too near for seeing,
And to his heart, new reconciled,
The Eternal takes his earth-bound child.

Who the essential secret spells
In those gigantic syllables,—
Flowing, ebbing, ebbing, flowing,—
Gathers wisdom past all knowing.
Song of the sea, I hear, I hear,
That deeper music of the sphere,
Catch the rhythm of sun and star,
And know what light and darkness are ;
Ay, faint beginnings of a rhyme
That swells beyond the tides of time,
Beat with thy rhythm in blood and breath
And make one song of life and death.

I hear, I hear, and rest content,
Merged in the primal element,
The old element whence life arose,
The fount of youth, to which it goes.

Give me the sunlight and the sea,
And who shall take my heaven from me ?

TO A SUCCESSFUL MAN.

(WHAT THE GHOSTS SAID.)

AND after all the labour and the pains,
 After the heaping up of gold on gold,
 After success that locked your feet in chains,
 And left you with a heart so tired and old,

Strange—is it not?—to find your chief desire
 Is what you might have had for nothing then—
 The face of love beside a cottage fire
 And friendly laughter with your fellow-men?

You were so rich when fools esteemed you poor.
 You ruled a field that kings could never buy :
 The whisper of the sea was at your door,
 And all those quiet stars were in your sky.

The nook of ferns below the breathless wood
 Where one poor book could unlock Paradise. . . .
 What will you give us now for that lost good?
 Better forget. You cannot pay the price.

You left them for the fame in which you trust.
 But youth, and hope—did you forsake them too?
 Courage! When dust at length returns to dust,
 In your last dreams they may come back to you.

MEMORIES OF THE PACIFIC COAST.

I KNOW a sunset shore

Where warm keen incense on the sea-wind blows,
And dim blue ranches (while these March winds roar)
Drown to the roofs in heliotrope and rose ;

Deserts of lost delight,

Cactus and palm and earth of thirsty gold,
Dark purple blooms round eaves of sun-washed white,
And that Hesperian fruit men sought of old.

The exquisite drought of love

Throbs in that land, drought that forgoes the dew
And all its life-springs, that the boughs above
May bear the fruits for which it thirsts anew.

And those pure mountains rise

Behind it, shutting our sad world away,
With shadowy facets where the sunset dies,
And cliffs like amethyst at the close of day.

An arm's-length off they seem

At dawn, among the sage-brush ; but, at noon,
Their angel-trails wind upward like a dream,
And their bright crests grow distant as the moon.

All day, from peaks of snow,

The dry ravines refresh their tawny drought,
Till, on the grey-green foothills, far below,
Like clusters of white grapes the lamps come out.

Then, breaths of orange-bloom

Drift over hushed white ranches on the plain,
And spires of eucalyptus cast their gloom
On brown adobe cloisters of old Spain.

There green-tressed pepper grows

In willowy trees that drop red tassels down,
And carpet the brown road with tints of rose
Between the palms that aisle the moon-white town.

.

Oh, to be wandering there,

Under the palm-trees, on that sunset shore,
Where the waves break in song, and the bright air
Is crystal-clean, and peace is ours once more.

There the lost wonder dwells,

Beauty, reborn in whiteness from the foam ;
There Youth returns with all its magic spells,
And the heart finds its long-forgotten home.

There, in that setting sun,

On soft white sand the great slow breaker falls.
There brood the huts where West and East are one,
And the strange air runs wild with elfin calls.

There, gazing far away,

Those brown-legged fisher-folk, with almond eyes,
Crouch by their nets, and through the rose-tinged spray
See their own Orient in those deepening skies.

Through fringes of the West,

They see the teeming East, beyond Japan,
Mother of races that, in age-long quest,
Have rounded earth, but end where they began ;

End in the strange recall

To that far childhood, that faint flowering past,
Where some dear shade, loved, lost, the first of all,
Opens the door to their dim home at last.

Home,—home ! Where is that land ?

Beyond the bounds of earth, the old hungering cry
Aches in the soul, drives us from all we planned,
And sets our sail to seek another sky.

THE RIDDLES OF MERLIN.

I.

As I was walking
 Alone by the sea,
 " *What is that whisper ?* "
 Said Merlin to me.
 " Only," I answered,
 " The sigh of the wave."
 " *Oh no,*" replied Merlin,
 " 'Tis the grass on your grave."

As I lay dreaming
 In churchyard ground,
 " *Listen,*" said Merlin,
 " *What is that sound ?* "
 " The green grass is growing,"
 I answered ; but he
 Chuckled, " *Oh no !*
 "Tis the sound of the sea."

As I went homeward
 At dusk by the shore,
 " *What is that crimson ?* "
 Said Merlin once more.
 " Only the sun," I said,
 " Sinking to rest."
 " *Sunset for East,*" he said,
 " *Sunrise for West.*"

II.

Tell me, Merlin—it is I

Who call thee, after a thousand Springs,—
Tell me by what wizardry

The white foam wakes in whiter wings,
Where surf and sea-gulls toss and cry
Like sister-flakes, as they mount and fly,
Flakes that the great sea flings on high,
To kiss each other and die ?

Tell me, Merlin, tell me why

These delicate things that feast on flowers,
Red admiral, brown fritillary,
Sister the flowers, yet sail the sky,
Frail ships that cut their cables, yet still fly
The colours we know them by ?

Tell me, Merlin, tell me why

The sea's chaotic colour grows
Into these rainbow fish whose Tyrian dye
In scales of gold and green reply
To blue-striped mackerel waves, to kelp-brown caves,
And deep-sea blooms of gold and green and rose ?
Why colours that the sea at random throws
Were ordered into this living harmony,
This little world, no bigger than the hand,
Gliding over the raw tints whence it came,
This opal-bellied patch of sand,
That floats above the sand, or darts a flame
Through woods of crimson lake, and flowers without a
name ?

See all their tints around its body strewn

In planetary order. Sun, moon, star,
Are not more constant to their tune
Than those light scales of colour are ;
Where each repeats the glory of its neighbour,
In the same pattern, with the same delight,
As if, without the artist's labour,
The palette of rich Chaos and old Night
Should spawn a myriad pictures, every line
True to the lost Designer's lost design.

Tell me, Merlin, for what eye
Gathers and grows this cosmic harmony ?
Can sea-gulls feed, or fishes brood
On music fit for angels' food ?
Did Nescience this delight create
To lure the conger to his mate ?

If this be all that Science tells
The narrowest church may peal its bells,
And Merlin work new miracles ;
While every dreamer, even as I,
May wonder on, until he die.

NIPPON.

LAST night, I dreamed of Nippon . . .
I saw a cloud of white
Drifting before the sunset
On seas of opal light.

Beyond the wide Pacific
I saw its mounded snow
Miraculously changing
In that deep evening glow,

To rosy rifts and hillocks,
To orchards that I knew,
To snows of peach and cherry,
And feathers of bamboo.

I saw, on twisted bridges,
In blue and crimson gleams,
The lanterns of the fishers,
Along the brook of dreams.

I saw the wreaths of incense
Like little ghosts arise,
From temples under Fuji,
From Fuji to the skies.

I saw that fairy mountain . . .
I watched it form and fade.
No doubt the gods were singing
When Nippon isle was made.

A JAPANESE LOVE-SONG.

I.

THE young moon is white,
 But the willows are blue :
 Your small lips are red,
 But the great clouds are gay :
 The waves are so many
 That whisper to you ;
 But my love is only
 One flight of spray.

II.

The bright drops are many,
 The dark wave is one :
 The dark wave subsides,
 And the bright sea remains !
 And wherever, O singing
 Maid, you may run,
 You are one with the world
 For all your pains.

III.

Though the great skies are dark,
 And your small feet are white,
 Though your wide eyes are blue
 And the closed poppies red,

Tho' the kisses are many
That colour the night,
They are linked like pearls
On one golden thread.

IV.

Were the gray clouds not made
For the red of your mouth ;
The ages for flight
Of the butterfly years ;
The sweet of the peach
For the pale lips of drouth,
The sunlight of smiles
For the shadow of tears ?

V.

Love, Love is the thread
That has pierced them with bliss !
All their hues are but notes
In one world-wide tune :
Lips, willows, and waves,
We are one as we kiss,
And your face and the flowers
Faint away in the moon.

THE HUMMING BIRDS.

(PRINCETON, NEW JERSEY.)

GREEN wing and ruby throat,
 What shining spell, what exquisite sorcery,
 Lured you to float
 And fight with bees round this one flowering tree ?

Petulant imps of light,
 What whisper or gleam or elfin-wild perfume,
 Thrilled through the night
 And drew you to this hive of rosy bloom ?

One tree, and one alone,
 Of all that load this magic air with spice
 Claims for its own
 Your brave migration out of Paradise ;

Claims you, and guides you, too,
 Three thousand miles across the summer's waste
 Of blooms ye knew
 Less finely fit for your ethereal taste.

To poets' youthful hearts,
 Even so the quivering April thoughts will fly,—
 Those irised darts,
 Those winged and tiny denizens of the sky.

Through beaks as needle fine
 They suck a redder honey than bees know.
 Unearthly wine
 Sleeps in this bloom ; and, when it falls, they go.

GHOSTS.

Oh, to creep in by candle-light,
 When all the world is fast asleep,
 Out of the cold winds, out of the night,
 Where the nettles wave and the rains weep !
 Oh, to creep in, lifting the latch
 So quietly that no soul could hear,
 And, at those embers in the gloom,
 Quietly light one careful match—
 You should not hear it, have no fear—
 And light the candle and look round
 The old familiar room ;
 To see the old books upon the wall
 And lovingly take one down again,
 And hear—O, strange to those that lay
 So patiently underground—
 The ticking of the clock, the sound
 Of clicking embers . . . watch the play
 Of shadows . . . till the implacable call
 Of morning turn our faces grey ;
 And, or ever we go, we lift and kiss
 Some idle thing that your hands may touch,
 Some paper or book that your hands let fall,
 And we never—when living—had cared so much
 As to glance upon twice . . . But now, oh, bliss
 To kiss and to cherish it, moaning our pain,
 Ere we creep to the silence again.

DEAD MAN'S MORRICE.

THERE came a crowder to the Mermaid Inn,
 One dark May night,
 Fiddling a tune that quelled our motley din,
 With quaint delight.
 It haunts me yet, as old lost airs will do,
 A phantom strain :
Look for me once, lest I should look for you,
 And look in vain.

In that old wood, where ghosts of lovers walk,
 At fall of day,
 Gleaning such fragments of their ancient talk
 As poor ghosts may,
 From leaves that brushed their faces, wet with dew,
 Or tears, or rain . . .
Look for me once, lest I should look for you,
 And look in vain.

Have we not seen them—pale forgotten shades
 That do return,
 Groping for those dim paths, those fragrant glades,
 Those nooks of fern,
 Only to find that, of the bliss they knew,
 No wraiths remain ;
Yet they still look, as I should look for you.
 And look in vain.

They see those happier ghosts that waned away—
Whither, who knows?—

Ghosts that come back with music and the may,
And Spring's first rose,
Lover and lass, to sing the old burden through,
Stave and refrain :

*Look for me once, lest I should look for you,
And look in vain.*

So, after death, if in that starless deep

I lose your eyes,
I'll haunt familiar places. I'll not keep
Tryst in the skies.

I'll haunt the whispering elms that found us true,
The old grass-grown lane.

*Look for me there, lest I should look for you,
And look in vain.*

There, as of old, under the dreaming moon,
A phantom throng

Floats through the fern, to a ghostly morrice tune,
A thin sweet song,

Hands link with hands, eyes drown in eyes anew,
Lips meet again . . .

*Look for me once, lest I should look for you,
And look in vain.*

THE PSYCHE OF OUR DAY.

As constant lovers may rejoice
 With seas between, with worlds between,
 Because a fragrance and a voice
 Are round them everywhere :
 So let me travel to the grave,
 Believing still—for I have seen—
 That Love's triumphant banners wave
 Beyond my own despair.

I have no trust in my own worth ;
 Yet have I faith, O love, for you,
 That every beauty in bloom or leaf,
 That even age and wrong
 May touch, may hurt you, on this earth,
 But only, only as kisses do ;
 Or as the fretted string of grief
 Completes the bliss of song.

That you shall see, on any grave
 The snow fall, like that unseen hand
 Which oh, so often, pressed your hair
 To cherish and console :
 That seas may roar and winds rave,
 But you shall feel and understand
 What vast caresses everywhere
 Convey you to the goal.

So was it always in the years
 When Love began, when Love began
 With eyes that were not touched of tears
 And lips that still could sing—

And all around us, in the May,
The child-god with his laughter ran,
And every bloom, on every spray,
Betrayed his fluttering wing.

So hold it, keep it, count it, sweet,
Until the end, until the end.
It is not cruelty, but bliss
That pains and is so fond :
Crush life like thyme beneath your feet,
And O, my love, when that strange friend,
The Shadow of Wings, which men call Death
Shall close your eyes, with that last kiss,
Ask not His name. A rosier breath
Shall waken you—beyond.

THE OLD FOOL IN THE WOOD.

“ If I could whisper you all I know,”
Said the Old Fool in the wood,
“ You’d never say that green leaves ‘ grow,’
You’d say, ‘ Ah, what a happy mood
The Master must be in to-day,
To think such thoughts.’ ”
That’s what you’d say.

“ If I could whisper you all I’ve heard,”
Said the Old Fool in the fern,
“ You’d never say, ‘ The song of a bird,’
You’d say, ‘ I’ll listen, and p’raps I’ll learn
One word of His joy as He passed this way,
One syllable more,’ ”
That’s what you’d say.

“ If I could tell you all the rest,”
Said the Old Fool under the skies,
“ You’d hug your griefs against your breast
And whisper with love-lit eyes,
‘ I am one with the sorrow that made the may,
And the pulse of His heart.’ ”
That’s what you’d say.

THE MATIN-SONG OF FRIAR TUCK.

I.

IF souls could sing to heaven's high King
 As blackbirds pipe on earth,
 How those delicious courts would ring
 With gusts of lovely mirth !
 What white-robed throng could lift a song
 So mellow with righteous glee
 As this brown bird that all day long
 Delights my hawthorn-tree.
 Hark ! That's the thrush
 With speckled breast
 From yon white bush
 Chaunting his best,—
Te Deum ! Te Deum laudamus !

II.

IF earthly dreams be touched with gleams
 Of Paradisal air,
 Some wings, perchance, of earth may glance
 Around our slumbers there ;
 Some breaths of may will drift our way
 With scents of leaf and loam,
 Some whistling bird at dawn be heard
 From those old woods of home.
 How souls would listen
 In those high places !
 What tears would glisten
 On glorious faces,—
Te Deum ! Te Deum laudamus !

III.

Then, still as frost, the heavenly host
 Would touch no golden wire,
 If but one cry of joy went by
 From this, our greenwood choir :
 Then, at one flash of daffodils,
 Where those sweet cries resound,
 Their heaven would seem the shadowy dream
 And earth the holy ground ;
 Ay, angels then
 Would jostle and clamour
 To hear the wren
 And the yellow-hammer,—
Te Deum ! Te Deum laudamus !

IV.

For birds by nature must enjoy
 The Lord their God for aye ;
 Therefore their music cannot cloy
 As lutes of angels may.
 Break, wild-flowers, through the golden floor
 Where long-faced martyrs sing.
 Then, let the carolling skylarks soar
 And flood their heaven with Spring.
 Oh, what a pæan
 Of joy would shake
 The empyrean.
 Awake ! Awake !—
Te Deum ! Te Deum laudamus !

V.

No king or priest shall mar my feast
 Wherever my soul may range.
 I have no fear of heaven's good cheer
 Unless our Master change.

But, when death's night is dying away,
If I might choose my bliss,
My love should say, at break of day,
With her first waking kiss :—
“ Hark ! That's the thrush
With speckled breast,
From yon white bush
Chaunting his best,—
Te Deum ! Te Deum laudamus ! ”

THE ELFIN ARTIST.

IN a glade of an elfin forest
 When Sussex was Eden-new,
 I came on an elvish painter
 And watched as his picture grew.
 A harebell nodded beside him.
 He dipt his brush in its dew.

And it might be the wild thyme round him
 That shone in that dark strange ring ;
 But his brushes were bees' antennæ,
 His knife was a wasp's blue sting ;
 And his gorgeous exquisite palette
 Was a butterfly's fan-shaped wing.

And he mingled its powdery colours
 And painted the lights that pass,
 On a delicate cobweb canvas
 That gleamed like a magic glass,
 And bloomed like a banner of elf-land
 Between two stalks of grass ;

Till it shone like an angel's feather
 With sky-born opal and rose,
 And gold from the foot of the rainbow,
 And colours that no man knows ;
 And I laughed in the sweet May weather,
 Because of the themes he chose.

For he painted the things that matter,
The tints that we all pass by,
Like the little blue wreaths of incense
That the wild thyme breathes to the sky ;
Or the first white bud of the hawthorn,
And the light in a blackbird's eye ;

And the shadows on soft white cloud-peaks
That carolling skylarks throw,—
Dark dots on the slumbering splendours
That under the wild wings flow,
Wee shadows like violets trembling
On the unseen breasts of snow ;

With petals too lovely for colour
That shake to the rapturous wings,
And grow as the bird draws near them,
And die as he mounts and sings ;—
Ah, only those exquisite brushes
Could paint those exquisite things.

PETER QUINCE.

PETER QUINCE was nine years old
When he see'd what never was told.

When he crossed the fairy fern,
Peter had no more to learn.

Just as day began to die,
He see'd 'em rustling on the sky ;

Ferns, like small green finger-prints
Pressed against them rosy tints,

Mother-o'-pearl and opal tinges
Dying along their whispering fringes,

Every colour, as it died,
Beaconing, *Come, to the other side.*

Up he crept, by the shrew-mouse track.
A robin chirped, *You woant come back.*

Through the ferns he crept to look.
There he found a gurt wide book ;

Much too big for a child to hold.
Its clasps were made of sunset gold.

It smelled as old ship's timbers do
He began to read it through.

All the magic pictures burned,
Like stained windows, as he turned

Page by big black-lettered page,
Thick as cream, and ripe with age.

There he read, till all grew dim.
Then green glow-worms lighted him.

There he read till he forgot
All that ever his teachers taught.

Someone, old as the moon, crept back,
Late that night by the shrew-mouse track.

Someone, taller maybe, by an inch.
Boys grow fast. He'll do at a pinch.

Only, folks that know'd him claim
Peter's wits were never the same.

Ev'ryone said that Peter Quince
H'aint been never the same child since.

Now he'd sit, in a trance, for hours,
Talkin' softly to bees and flowers.

Now, in the ingle-nook at night,
Turn his face from the candle-light ;

Till, as you thought him fast asleep,
You'd see his eyes were wide and deep ;

And, in their wild magic glow,
Rainbow colours 'ud come and go.

Dame Quince never could wholly wake him,
So they say, tho' she'd call and shake him.

He sat dreaming. He sat bowed
In a white sleep, like a cloud.

Over his dim face at whiles,
Flickered liddle elvish smiles.

Once, the robin at the pane,
Tried to chirp the truth again.

*Peter Quince has crossed the fern.
Peter Quince will not return.*

*Drive the changeling from your chair !
That's not Peter dreaming there.*

*Peter's crossed the fern to look.
Peter's found the magic book.*

Ah, Dame Quince was busy sobbin',
So she couldn't hear poor Robin.

And the changeling, in a dream,
Supped that night on pears and cream.

Night by night, he cleared his platter ;
And—from moon to moon—grew fatter ;

Mostly dumb, or muttering dimly
When the smoke blew down the chimley,

*Peter's turned another page.
I have almost earned my wage.*

Then the good dame's eyelids shone
.

This was many a year ago.
Peter Quince is reading on.

THE SILVER CROOK.

I was mistuk, once, for the Poape of Roame. . . .
 The drawled fantastic words came floating down
 Behind me, five long years ago, when last
 I left the old shepherd, Bramble, by his fold.

Bramble was fond, you'll judge, of his own tales,
 And cast a gorgeous fly for the unwary :
 But I was late, and could not listen then,
 Despite his eager leer.

Yet, many a night,
 And many a league from home, out of a dream
 Of white chalk coasts, and roofs of Horsham stone,
 Coloured like russet apples, there would come
 Music of sheep-bells, baaing of black-nosed lambs,
 Barking of two wise dogs, crushed scents of thyme,
 A silver crook, bright as the morning star
 Above the naked downs. Then—Bramble's voice,
I was mistuk, once, for the Poape of Roame,
 Would almost wake me, wondering what he meant.

Now, five years later, while the larks went up
 Over the dew-ponds in a wild-winged glory,
 And all the Sussex downs, from weald to sea,
 Were patched like one wide crazy quilt, in squares
 Of yellow and crimson, clover and mustard-flower,
 Edged with white chalk, I found him once again.
 He leaned upon his crook, unbudged by war,
 Unchanged, and leering eagerly as of old.

How should I paint old Bramble—the shrewd face,
 Brown as the wrinkled loam, the bright brown eyes,
 The patriarchal beard, the moleskin cap,
 The boots that looked like tree-stumps, the loose cloak

Tanned by all weathers,—every inch of him
 A growth of Sussex soil. His back was bent
 Like wind-blown hawthorn, turning from the sea,
 With roots that strike the deeper.

Well content
 With all his world, and boastful as a child,
 In splendid innocence of the worldling's way,
 Whose murderous ego skulks behind a hedge
 Of modest privet,—no, I cannot paint him.
 Better to let him talk, and paint himself.
 "Marnin'," he said; and swept away five years.

With absolute dominion over time,
 Waiving all prelude, he picked up the thread
 We dropped that day, and cast his bait again :—
I was mistuk, once, for the Poape of Roame.—
 "Tell me," I said. "Explain. I've dreamed of it."—
 "I rackon you doan't believe it. Drunken Dick,
 'Ull tell you 'tis as true's I'm stannin' here.
 It happened along of this old silver crook.
 I call it silver 'cos it shines so far.
 My wife can see it over at Ovingdean
 When I'm on Telscombe Tye. They doan't mek crooks
 Like this in Sussex now. They've lost the way
 To shape 'em. That's what they French papists knowed
 Over at Arundel. They tried to buy
 My crook, to carry in church. But I woan't sell 'en.
 I've heerd there's magic in a crook like this,—
 White magic. Well, I rackon it did save Dick
 More ways than one, that night, from the old Black Ram.
 I've med a song about it. There was once
 A Lunnon poet, down here for his health,
 Asked me to sing it to 'un, an' I did.
 It med him laff, too. 'Sing it again,' he says,
 'But go slow, this time.' 'No, I woan't,' I says
 (I knowed what *he* was trying). 'No,' I says,
 'I woan't go slow. You'll ketch 'un if I do.'
 You see, he meks a tedious mort of money
 From these here ballad books, an' I wer'n't goin'
 To let these Lunnon chuckle-heads suck my brains.
 I med it to thet ancient tune you liked,
The Brown Girl. 'Member it?"

Bramble cleared his throat,
 Spat at a bee, leaned forward on his crook,
 Fixed his brown eyes upon a distant spire,
 Solemnly swelled his lungs, once, twice, and thrice ;
 Then, like an old brown thrush, began to sing :—

“ The Devil turns round when he hears the sound
 Of bells in a Sussex foald.
 One crack, I rackon, from this good crook
 Would make old Scratch leave hoald.
 They can't shape crooks to-day like mine,
 For the liddle folk helped 'em then.
 I've heerd some say as they've see'd 'en shine
 From Ditchling to Fairlight Glen.

I loaned 'em a loanst o' my crook one day
 To carry in Arundel.
 They'd buy 'en to show in their church, they say,
 But goald woan't mek me sell.
 I never should find a crook so slick,
 So silver in the sun ;
 And, if you talk to Drunken Dick,
 He'll tell you what it's done.

You'll find him spannelling round the Plough ;
 And, Lord ! when Dick was young,
 He'd drink enough to droawn a cow,
 And roughen a tiger's tongue.
 He'd drink Black Ram till his noäse turned blue,
 And the liddle black mice turned white.
 You ask 'en what my crook can do,
 An' what he see'd that night.

He says, as through the fern he ran
 ('Twas Pharisees' fern, say I),
 A wild potatur, as big as a man,
 Arose and winked its eye.
 He says it took his arm that night,
 And waggled its big brown head,
 Then sang : *This world will never go right
 Till Drunken Dick be dead.*

He shook it off and, rambling round,
 Among the goalden gorse,
 He heers a kin' of sneering sound
 Pro-ciddin' from a horse,
 Which reared upright, then said out loud
 (While Dick said, 'I'll be danged !').
*'His parents will be tedious proud
 When Drunken Dick is hanged.'*

I rackon 'twould take a barrel of ale,
 Betwix' my dinner and tea,
 To mek me see the very nex' thing
 That Drunken Dick did see ;
 For first he thought 'twas elephants walked
 Behind him on the Tye,
 And then he saw fower ricks of straw
 That heaved against the sky.

He saw 'em lift. He saw 'em shift.
 He saw gurt beards arise.
 He saw 'em slowly lumbering down
 A hundred times his size ;
 And, as he ran, he heer'd 'em say,
 Whenever his head he turned,
*'This world will never be bright and gay
 Till Drunken Dick be burned.'*

And then as Dick escaped again
 And squirmed the churchyard through,
 The cock that crowns the weather-vane
 Cried '*How d'ye doodle doo ?*'—
 'Why, how d'ye doodle doo ?' says Dick,
 '*I know why you go round.*'
 '*There'll be no luck,*' that rooster shruck,
 '*Till Drunken Dick be drowned !*'

And then, as Dick dodged round they barns,
 And med for the white chalk coast,
 He meets Himself, with the two black horns,
 And eyes 'twud mek you roast.

‘ Walcome ! walcome ! ’ old Blackamoor cried,
‘ ’Tis muttonless day in hell,
So I think I’ll have your kidneys, fried,
And a bit of your liver as well.’

Then Dick he loosed a tarr’ble shout,
And the Devil stopped dead to look ;
And the sheep-bells rang, and the moon came out,
And it shone on my silver crook.
‘ I rackon,’ says Dick, ‘ if you’re oald Nick,
You’d batter be scramblin’ home ;
For *those* be the ringers of Arundel,
And *that* is the Poape of Roame.’ ”

THE SUSSEX SAILOR.

Oh, once, by Cuckmere Haven,
 I heard a sailor sing
 Of shores beyond the sunset,
 And lands of lasting spring,
 Of blue lagoons and palm-trees
 And isles where all was young ;
 But this was ever the burden
 Of every note he sung :—

*Oh, have you seen my true love
 A-walking in that land ?
 Or have you seen her footprints
 Upon that shining sand ?
 Beneath the happy palm-trees,
 By Eden whispers fanned . . .
 Oh, have you seen my true love
 A-walking in that land ?*

And, once, in San Diego,
 I heard him sing again,
 Of Amberley, Rye, and Bramber,
 And Brede and Fairlight Glen :
 The nestling hills of Sussex,
 The russet-roofed elfin towns,
 And the skylark up in a high wind,
 Carolling over the downs.

*From Warbleton to Wild Brook
 When May is white as foam,
 Oh, have you seen my dearling
 On any hills of home ?*

*Or have you seen her shining,
Or only touched her hand?
Oh, have you seen my true love
A-walking in that land?*

And, once again, by Cowfold,
I heard him singing low,
'Tis not the leagues of ocean
That hide the hills I know.
The May that shines before me
Has made a ghost of May.
The valleys that I would walk in
Are twenty years away.

*Ah, have you seen my true love
A-walking in that land? . . .
On hills that I remember,
In valleys I understand,
So far beyond the sunset,
So very close at hand.—
Oh, have you seen my true love
In that immortal land?*

THE BEE IN CHURCH.

THE nestling church at Ovingdean
 Was fragrant as a hive in May ;
 And there was nobody within
 To preach, or praise, or pray.

The sunlight slanted through the door,
 And through the panes of painted glass,
 When I stole in, alone, once more
 To feel the ages pass.

Then, through the dim grey hush there droned
 An echoing plain-song on the air,
 As if some ghostly priest intoned
 An old Gregorian there.

Saint Chrysostom could never lend
 More honey to the heavenly Spring
 Than seemed to murmur and ascend
 On that invisible wing.

So small he was, I scarce could see
 My girdled brown hierophant ;
 But only a Franciscan bee
 In such a bass could chant.

His golden Latin rolled and boomed.

It swayed the altar flowers anew,
Till all that hive of worship bloomed
With dreams of sun and dew.

Ah, sweet Franciscan of the May,

Dear chaplain of the fairy queen,
You sent a singing heart away
That day from Ovingdean.

THE HILLS OF YOUTH.

ONCE, on the far blue hills,
 Alone with the pine and the cloud, in those high still
 places ;
 Alone with a whisper of ferns and a chuckle of rills,
 And the peat-brown pools that mirrored the angels'
 faces,
 Pools that mirrored the wood - pigeon's grey - blue
 feather,
 And all my thistledown dreams as they drifted
 along ;
 Once, oh, once, on the hills, thro' the red - bloomed
 heather
 I followed an elfin song.

Once, by the wellsprings of joy,
 In the glens of the hart's-tongue fern, where the brooks
 came leaping
 Over the rocks, like a scrambling bare-foot boy
 That never had heard of a world grown old with
 weeping ;
 Once, thro' the golden gorse (do the echoes linger
 In Paradise woods, where the foam of the may runs
 wild ?)
 I followed the flute of a light-foot elfin singer,
 A god with the eyes of a child.

Once, he sang to me there,
 From a crag on a thyme-clad height where the dew still
 glistened ;

He sang like the spirit of Spring in that dawn-flushed
air,
While the angels opened their doors and the whole sky
listened :
He sang like the soul of a rainbow, if heaven could hear
it,
Beating to heaven, on wings that were April's own ;
A song too happy and brave for the heart to bear it,
Had the heart of the hearer known.

Once, ah, once, no more,
The hush and the rapture of youth in those holy places,
The stainless height, the hearts that sing and adore
Till the sky breaks out into flower with the angels'
faces !
Once, in the dawn, they were mine ; but the noon bereft
me.
At midnight now, in an ebb of the loud world's roar,
I catch but a broken stave of the songs that left me
On hills that are mine no more.

THE LAST OF THE SNOW.

I.

Now, feathered with snow, the fir-tree's beautiful sprays
 Pensively nod in the sun, while young April delays,—

“ Yes—yes—*we* know

How briefly our hearts with the light of the may-tide
 shall glow,

Ere the darkness of winter return ; and the green boughs
 and gold

Shall all be choked down by the snow

In the end, as of old.

II.

“ Yes, white snow, you will have your revenge for the
 warm dreams that stir

In the sap of my boughs,” said the wise old heart of the
 fir.

“ None the less you shall go !

For my brother, the hawthorn, has dreamed of a new
 kind of snow,

With honey for bees in its heart ; and it's worth it, I
 say,

Though you'll freeze us to death, as we know,

At the end of our day.

III.

“ There’s a glory in fighting for dreams that are doomed
to defeat ;
So perhaps it’s because you’ll return that the bloom smells
so sweet.

There’s our victory, too,
Which you cannot prevent, for we’re stronger in one
thing than you,
Since we win the one prize that’s worth winning, win
heaven on earth ;
And, if truth remain true,
Find in death our rebirth.”

IV.

So, feathered with snow, the beautiful boughs of the fir
Dipped to the thaw of the world as the spring touched
them there ;

And the lane, like a brook,
Sang in the sun, and the pretty girls came out to look,
Saying, “ Spring is begun ! Look, look, how the snow
runs away !
It is only the snow on the fir-tree that seems to delay ! ”

V.

“ That’s true,” said the fir, “ and if only the wind of the
spring

Would whisper a tale that I know, or a blackbird sing,
I think I might shake off this ghost ! ”—

“ Oh, pouf ! If that’s all,”

Chuckled the spring-wind, “ listen ! I think that’s the
call

Of a blackbird ! And what d’you suppose is that other
faint sound—

Snow melting ? — leaves budding ? — or young lovers
whispering all round,

In forest and meadow and city ? Oh, yes, they’ve
begun !

Wake up ! Tell that spectre to go ! ”
And the fir-tree listened and shook, and the last of the
snow
Slipped from its hold and plumped down on the daffodil
bed ;
And the green-plumed branches danced for delight in the
sun ;
And a blackbird alighted, at once, on the bright wet
boughs,
And called to his bright-eyed mate on the roof of the
shed,
“ *Oh, see what a beautiful hiding-place for our house !* ”
—“ That’s better,” the fir-tree said.

A SPRING HAT.

*Dear Poet of the Sabine farm,
 Whose themes, not all of blood and tears,
 Beneath your happy trees could charm
 Your lovers for two thousand years,
 You would not blame a modern pen
 For touching love with mirth again.*

For Dick and Joan went up to town,
 And Joan must choose a hat for spring ;
 And, though Melpomene may frown,
 There is no jollier theme to sing.
 Ah, younger, happier than they knew
 Into the fairy shop they flew.

Then she began—to try them on.
 The first one had a golden feather
 That like the godling's arrow shone
 When first he pierced their hearts together.
 " Now, what d'you think of that ? " she said,
 Tilting it on her dainty head.

The next one, like a violet wreath,
 Nestled among her fragrant hair ;
 But oh, her shining eyes beneath,
 The while she tipped it here and there
 And said, with eager face aglow,
 " How do you like it ? So ? Or so ? "

The next one was an elfin crown,
 She wore it as Titania might.
 She gave the glass a smile, a frown,
 And murmured "No. It isn't *quite* !
 I think the brown and fawn might do ;
 Or no, perhaps the green—don't you ? "

Maidens, the haughtiest ever seen,
 Like willing slaves around her moved.
 They tried the mauve. They tried the green
 They trembled when she disapproved ;
 And, when she waved the pink away,
 They tried the lilac and the grey.

She perched the black upon her nose.
 She hid an eye behind the blue.
 She set the orange and the rose,
 With subtle artistry, askew.
 She stripped the windows of their store,
 Then sent her slaves to search for more.

And while they searched,—*O happy face*
Against the dark eternal night,
If I could paint you with the grace
The Master used !—

A dancing light
 Shone in the laughter of her eyes.
 They glowed with bird-like swift surprise.

She saw—the very hat for spring !
 The first one, with the golden feather
 Dropped from a laughing angel's wing
 Through skies of Paradisal weather.
 She pinned it on her dainty head.
 "This is the very thing," she said.

"Now, don't you like me ?"—"Yes, I do,"
 Said Dick. The slaves were far away.
 "Your eyes have never looked so blue."—
 "I mean the hat," she tried to say.
 He kissed her. "Wait a bit," said she.
 "There's just one more I want to see."

*Who knows but when the uproar dies,
And mightier songs are dead and gone,
Perhaps her laughing face may rise
Out of the darkness and live on,
If one, who loves, should read and say,
This also happened in that day ?*

THE SHADOW.

A SHADOW leaned over me, whispering, in the darkness,
 Thoughts without sound ;
 Sorrowful thoughts that filled me with helpless wonder
 And held me bound.

Sadder than memory, sharp as remorse, in the quiet
 Before I slept,
 The whisper I heard of the one implacable Shadow,
 And my heart wept.

“ Day by day, in your eyes, the light grows dimmer,
 With the joy you have sung.
 You knew it would go ; but, ah, when you knew it and
 sang it,
 Your heart was young ;

“ And a year to you, then, was an age ; but now,” said
 the Shadow,
 Malignant and cold,
 “ The light and the colour are fading, the ecstasy dying,
 It is time to grow old.”

Oh, I could have borne the worst that he had to tell me,
 Lost youth, age, death ;
 But he turned to breathe on the quiet heart sleeping
 beside me
 The same cold breath.

And there by the throat I grappled him. “ Let me bear
 all of it.
 Let her dream on.”
 Soundlessly, shadow with shadow, we wrestled together,
 Till the grey dawn.

DISTANT VOICES.

REMEMBER the house of thy father,
 When the palaces open before thee,
 And the music would make thee forget.
 When the cities are glittering around thee,
 Remember the lamp in the evening,
 The loneliness and the peace.

When the deep things that cannot be spoken
 Are drowned in a riot of laughter,
 And the proud wine foams in thy cup ;
 In the day when thy wealth is upon thee,
 Remember thy path through the pine-wood,
 Remember the ways of thy peace.

Remember—remember—remember—
 When the cares of this world and its treasure
 Have dulled the swift eyes of thy youth ;
 When beauty and longing forsake thee,
 And there is no hope in the darkness,
 And the soul is drowned in the flesh ;

Turn, then, to the house of thy boyhood,
 To the sea and the hills that would heal thee,
 To the voices of those thou hast lost,
 The still small voices that loved thee,
 Whispering, out of the silence,
Remember—remember—remember—

*Remember the house of thy father,
 Remember the paths of thy peace.*

A TREE AGAINST THE SKY.

FALL, happy leaves, that danced so high in the air.
The One I love was hidden in your gay crowds.
Fall, you thronged joys, a Spirit far more fair
Slept in your rustling clouds.

One lean dark Form, with arms upstretched in prayer,
Emerges now, from dreams that drift and die.
Fall, yellowing leaves, and let the tree stand bare
Against the wintry sky.

PARACLETE.

TONGUE hath not told it,
 Heart hath not known ;
 Yet shall the bough swing
 When it hath flown.

Dreams have denied it,
 Fools forsworn :
 Yet it hath comforted
 Each man born.

Once and again it is
 Blown to me,
 Sweet from the wild thyme,
 Salt from the sea ;

Blown thro' the ferns
 Faint from the sky ;
 Shadowed in water,
 Yet clear as a cry,

Light on a face,
 Or touch of a hand,
 Making my still heart
 Understand.

Earth hath not seen it,
Nor heaven above.
Yet shall the wild bough
Bend with the Dove.

Yea, tho' the bloom fall
Under Thy feet,
Veni, Creator,
Paraclete !

THE GOLDEN GARRET.

WAS it a dream—that country, free from care,
 Though never free from hope, or love, or debt,
 Where artists lived in garrets, cold and bare
 Except for their own daubs, and you, Musette ;
 Or you, Fifine, Pepita, and Ninette,
 Flushed with the wine for which you pawned your
 shoes ;
 And you, the ghost of Murger, singing yet
 Bohême, blithe haunt of sparrows and the Muse ?

Dark-eyed Pepita, tilting back her chair,
 Blowing blue smoke from many a cigarette,
 With one red clove-pink in her coarse black hair
 And slim brown feet upon the table set ;
 Lynx-eyed Fifine, who laughed away regret
 And welcomed all adventure, win or lose ;
 In Chelsea, was it, or Montmartre, you met ?
 Bohême, blithe haunt of sparrows and the Muse.

But you, Musette, whose rose-leaf lips could swear,
 Whose foot could stamp, like Hebe's in a pet ;
 Whose wildly generous hands would always share
 Their own last sou, or risk it on a bet ;
 How often were your grey eyes wide and wet
 For some poor luckless fool, with April dews ?
 When Spring returns, can you—her child—forget
 Bohême, blithe haunt of sparrows and the Muse ?

ENVOY.

Princess, the world runs mad with fuss and fret !
Would we not yet, if time were ours to choose,
And one such golden garret still to let,
Fly to that haunt of sparrows and the Muse ?

THE CONDUCTOR.

Like oranges, friend ?—No poem in those three words ?
Wait. You shall hear them again.

When London sweated and choked with heat and drought,
A man, like a sack of bones,
With a pinched, white, delicate face, and a soft brown
beard
(Saint John of Clapham !) climbed to the top of the bus,
Painfully, hauled up the stair by the vigorous hand
Of a buxom wench in front, and sturdily pushed
By their two small boys below.
There was only one seat ;
And the hot conductor bawled, "*One only outside !*
Grr ! Inside only ! One only outside, I said !"

The Cockney Juno looked at him, half amused,
With her bold, black, honest eyes.

"Right-o," she said.

They settled their sack of bones on the vacant seat.
Saint John was breathing with care, a little afraid
It might bring on that coughing.

"*That's right !*" said Juno,
"*I'll stand. 'E mustn't !*"—

"*Nor any one else up 'ere !*"

The conductor snarled like a man with a rat at his liver.
She smiled at him again with her bold black eyes,
Taking her time to obey.

She liked fresh air.

The doctor, of course, had said it was good for her man,
And good for the children.

With one Amazonian arm
She lifted the younger child against her breasts
That, under the cool blue leaves of the thin print gown,
Shook, with the jolting bus, like fruit on a tree.
The smooth little colt-like legs of the child in her arm
Shone in the sunlight, over the passengers' heads.

The bus pulled up with a jerk. Mother and children,
Obeying the law, went down to their inside place.
The dying man, with a flicker of male pugnacity,
Paying three sixpences out, and strong in the fact
That journeys like this were not made every day,
Looked up at the grim conductor.

“ You'll tell 'em,” he said,
“ As soon as a seat is vacant, to come up 'ere.”

The bus rolled on. The houses thinned, and the smell
Of lilac and may, like breezes from Eden Garden,
Met the sad fugitive out of the City of Death.
This day of the spring was his. Yet he looked troubled ;
Till, after a while, two twopenny passengers rose,
Rang the bell for the bus to stop, and descended.

He cocked his head to listen, his delicate face
Tense with the over-anxiety of the weak
Who, all too often in life, had been pushed to the wall ;
But now he heard them.

Children and mother, all smiles,
Ascended the stair. They patted his arm as they passed.
“ Now, ain't that nice ? Look, Will, it's the very front
seat ! ”

They took their places, the elder boy at her side,
Up and down restlessly bobbing and staring around ;
The child astride on her knee.

Saint John's wan face
Looked happy now, and quietly brightened to see her
Drinking her fill of the wholesome country air.
He watched her, glad that the joyous moment absorbed
her.

Whatever might follow, he found his joy in her joy.
He watched her, alive to the sights and sounds of the
fields,

Was aware of them all through *her*,—
The spires of chestnut blossom, the loaded boughs
That made the outside passengers duck their heads ;
The cows in the cooling stream, under shadowy willows ;
The hens by the shed, with the little arched hole in the
door ;
The white horse under the elm-tree, dappled with
shadows ;
All streaming by, like a picture, a coloured film,
A story thrown upon darkness—for him.

But, for her,—

The thought grew bright in his face—it was life, real life,
A real substantial earth.

At last, the bus

Pulled up at the end of their world, the country inn
That marked the very last inch of their sixpenny ride.

They rose. They looked at the fields to left and right.
Juno lifted an arm, round, strong, and bare,
And pointed over a meadow. "*We mustn't walk far,
We'll 'ave to go back by the six o'clock bus,*" she said.
"*That's where we'll 'ave our dinner, under that 'edge,
Among them ox-eye daisies. Come along, Will.*"

They gathered him up and helped him, carefully, down.
They stood on the dusty road, a little bewildered
To find they were free of the kingdom of summer at last
For one whole day.
But, as they slowly led their bundle of bones
To a stile in the flowering hedge, the conductor's voice
Rasped out on the bee-buzzing stillness, '*Arf a mo !*
He stooped for a moment, rummaging under the stairs ;
Then, running across the road to Saint John of Clapham,
He awkwardly thrust an orange into his hand,
Like oranges, friend ?

Saint John, without a word,
Took it, as children accept a gift from the sky.
Back to his bus the conductor hurried again
And tugged at his bell. As he turned the corner he saw
Saint John at rest on the stile, in the flowering hedge ;
Peeling the fruit with his teeth, spitting out pips,
And munching the pulp with the strange voracious
delight
Of a man to whom death brings gifts.

Like oranges, friend ?

A PASSING LIKENESS.

ALIVE—in the flesh—no phantom ! A great bell
 Struck brazen noon. He passed, in the crowded street.
 It seemed that, if I had paused, laughed, broken the
 spell
 That bound us, he would have met me as old friends
 meet.

The very face of the dead,—each curve, each line,
 Imaged its own in the whimsical face I knew.
 Eyes that had long been darkened turned on mine
 With all the old light of our friendship shining through.

A stranger ! And yet—oh, like as a wave to a wave,
 Long broken, lost, and reborn, and for ever the same,—
 It seemed that one who had long been shut in the grave
 Would have answered, at once, had I only breathed
 his name.

PAGAN MARJORIE.

WHEN Marjorie walked in the wood
 There was nothing to frighten her there.
 She was beautiful, bold, and good ;
 But the little leaves whispered *beware* ;
 For she walked,
 Alone in the
 Wood,
 Like a daughter of Berkeley Square.

She had left her car by the road ;
 And her shoes, at the most, were threes.
 She was dressed in the latest mode ;
 But she stole through the glimmering trees
 And into the
 Ferns tip-
 toed,
 Though the wild briars clung to her knees ;

Till, under the boughs of a pine,
 Where the woods run down to the sand,
 She saw, white line upon line,
 The salt waves creep to the land,
 And shielded her
 Eyes from the
 Shine
 Of the warm blue sea with her hand.

Was it only the blaze of the sea
That dazzled poor Marjorie there ?
Ah, what was the chuckle of glee
That struck her, awake and aware,
While her mother
Was taking
Tea,
With the Begums of Berkeley Square ?

Ah, what was the flute that she heard
On the cliff, from that wild sea-shelf ?
Pan's voice, or the cry of a bird ?
And who was the bare brown elf
That danced on the
Sand ? She
Stared ;
For that sun-burnt fay was herself.

And the salt sea sang in her blood,
And she danced, with the wind in her hair ;
While Marjorie, watching her, stood
In the shade of the pine-tree there,
And hungrily
Wished that the
Wood
Would swallow up Berkeley Square.

THE NEW DUCKLING.

" I WANT to be new," said the duckling.
 " O, ho ! " said the wise old owl,
 While the guinea-hen cluttered off chuckling
 To tell all the rest of the fowl.

" I should like a more elegant figure,"
 That child of a duck went on.
 " I should like to grow bigger and bigger,
 Until I could swallow a swan.

I *won't* be the bond-slave of habit.
 I *won't* have these webs on my toes.
 I want to run round like a rabbit,
 A rabbit as red as a rose.

I *don't* want to waddle like mother,
 Or quack like my silly old dad.
 I want to be utterly other,
 And *frightfully* modern and mad."

" Do you know," said the turkey, " you're quacking !
 There's a fox creeping up thro' the rye ;
 And, if you're not utterly lacking,
 You'll make for that duck-pond. Good-bye ! "

But the duckling was perky as perky.
 " Take care of your stuffing," he called.
 This was horribly rude,—to a turkey.
 " But you aren't a real turkey," he bawled.

“ You’re an Early Victorian sparrow,
A ball of conventional fluff.
Do you think I believe in that narrow,
Banal, hypocritical stuff ?

I shall break all your fetters and tethers
And rock my dear Reynard to sleep.
I shall pillow his head on my feathers,
And give him the best ones to keep.”

Now the curious end of this fable
—So far as the rest ascertained,
Though they searched from the barn to the stable,—
Was that *only his feathers remained*.

So he *wasn’t* the bond-slave of habit,
And he *didn’t* have webs on his toes ;
And *perhaps* he runs round like a rabbit,
A rabbit as *red* as a rose.

THE INN OF APOLLO.

HAVE you supped at the Inn of Apollo,
 While the last light fades from the West ?
 Has the Lord of the Sun, at the world's end,
 Poured you his ripest and best ?
 Oh, there's wine in that Inn of Apollo ;

Wine, mellow and deep as the sunset,
 With mirth in it, singing as loud
 As the skylark sings in a high wind,
 High over a crisp white cloud.
 Have you laughed in that Inn of Apollo ?

Was the whole world molten in music
 At once, by the heat of that wine ?
 Did the stars and the tides and your own heart
 Dance with the heavenly Nine ?
 For they dance in that Inn of Apollo.

Was their poetry croaked by the sages,
 Or born in a whisper of wings ?
 For the music that masters the ages,
 Be sure, is the music that sings !
 Yes, they sing in that Inn of Apollo.

HELICON.

I CLIMBED to Helicon's height and found you,
 Daughters of Memory, heavenly Nine.
 Though the dawn-mist flowed like a veil around you,
 I drank your glory again like wine.

I saw how the cold clear morning glances
 Through peaks of pine on your breasts of snow,
 Where, slowly wreathing your stately dances,
 You drift through the glens of delight and go ;

With scents of the wild thyme round you blowing,
 And limbs that burn in the rising sun,
 And the golden law of the measure showing
 The way that the many are woven in one ;

How the pulse of life dictates your pleasure
 To hearts and tides and the stars on high ;
 For all the universe moves in measure,
 And even the gods, if they break it, die.

Long since, in music, this law was spoken
 To all that wander on Helicon hill.
 By wrong and death though the song be broken,
 The stars are working the Muses' will.

This law runs deeper than all earth's dreaming.
 Who follows it, walks in a heaven unseen.
 He has passed all veils of thinking and seeming,
 Who drinks one cup of this Hippocrene.

EUTERPE.

THE witchery of her voice from far blue hills
 At sunset, called me on,
 With exquisite echoes of all those bird-like rills
 That warble on Helicon.
 Once, over a cloud of thyme, I saw her gleam.
 I touched her snowy side.
 She vanished, into the dusk, a moth-like dream ;
 And all that music died.

Farewell, Euterpe. Turn to your own skies.
 Few dreams are half so fair
 As those that lit the mutiny of your eyes
 And crowned your fragrant hair ;
 Yet, if the lyric Muse like mist can go,
 I, too, can go like rain ;
 For I've a tryst to keep on earth below,
 A troth to plight again.

Let all those proud immortals, then, betray
 The hopes they brought to birth ;
 But I will crown, with violets of a day,
 A love that walks on earth ;
 Though never a Muse on Helicon may wear
 More sweetness on her brow
 Then lives and breathes in my dear lady's hair
 Like April blossoms now.

Then, as I looked into my true love's face,
Thinking all dreams had gone,
Clear, through her own deep eyes, with mocking grace,
The lost Immortal shone.
Low from her lips the sweet lost music flowed,—
“*Euterpe left your sky*
Only to be your comrade on the road.
Look closely. It is I.”

THE LAST OF THE BOOKS.

Is it too strange to think

That, when all life at last from earth is gone,
And round the sun's pale blink

Our desolate planet wheels its ice and stone,
Housed among storm-proof walls there yet may abide
Defying long the venoms of decay,

A still dark throng of books, dumb books of song
And tenderest fancies born of youth and May?

A quiet remembering host,

Outliving the poor dust that gave them birth,
Unvisited by even a wandering ghost,

But treasuring still the music of our earth,
In little fading hieroglyphs they shall bear,

Through death and night, the legend of our Spring,
And how the lilac scented the bright air

When hearts throbbed warm, and lips could kiss and
sing.

And, ere that record fail,

Strange voyagers from a mightier planet come
On wingéd ships that through the void can sail

And gently alight upon our ancient home ;

Strange voices echo, and strange flares explore,

Strange hands, with curious weapons, burst these bars,
Lift the brown volumes to the light once more,

And bear their stranger secrets through the stars.

SEAGULLS ON THE SERPENTINE.

MEMORY, out of the mist, in a long slow ripple
 Breaks, blindly, against the shore.
 The mist has buried the town in its own oblivion.
 This, this is the sea once more.

Mist—mist—brown mist ; but a sense in the air of snow-
 flakes !

I stand where the ripples die,
 Lift up an arm and wait, till my lost ones know me,
 Wheel overhead, and cry.

Salt in the eyes, and the seagulls, mewing and swooping,
 Snatching the bread from my hand ;
 Brushing my hand with their breasts, in swift caresses
 To show that they understand.

Oh, why are you so afraid ? We are all of us exiles !
 Wheel back in your clamorous rings !
 We have all of us lost the sea, and we all remember.
 But you—have wings.

THE OAK-WOOD.

(SHADOW-OF-A-LEAF SINGS.)

LAUGH—world—
 Laugh and sing.
 I have set my deep woods
 Whispering.

None can see them ;
 None can know.
 Oaks take
 An age to grow.

Blow your trumpets.
 Beat your drums.
 I bide my time ;
 But my time comes.

Bind you roses
 Round your brow.
 I am planting
 Acorns now.

You'll be hushed
 At shut of day.
 My woods whisper
 On for aye.

THE ROAD THROUGH CHAOS.

I.

THERE is one road, one only, to the Light ;
 A narrow way, but Freedom walks therein ;
 A strait firm road through Chaos and old Night,
 And all these wandering Jack-o'-Lents of Sin.

It is the road of Law, where Pilate stays
 To hear, at last, the answer to his cry ;
 And mighty sages, groping through their maze
 Of eager questions, hear a child reply.

*" Truth ? What is Truth ? Come, look upon my tables.
 Begin at your beginnings once again.
 Twice one is two ! "* If all the rest be fables,
 There's one poor glimpse of Truth to keep you sane.

For truth, at first, is clean accord with fact,
 Whether in line or thought, or word, or act.

II.

Then, by those first, those clean, precise, accords,
 Build to the Lord your temples and your song ;
 The curves of beauty, music's wedded chords
 Resolving into heaven all hate and wrong.

Let harmonies of colour marry and follow,
And breaking waves in a rhythmic dance ensue ;
And all your thought fly free as the wings of the swallow,
Whose arrowy curves obey their measure, too.

Then shall the marching stars and tides befriend you,
And your own heart, and the world's heart, pulse in
rhyme ;
Then shall the mob of the passions that would rend you
Crown you their Captain and march on in time.

So shall you repossess your struggling soul,
Conquer your world, and find the eternal goal.

THE WORLD'S WEDDING.

"Et quid curae nobis de generibus et speciebus? Et uno Verbo omnia, et unum loquuntur omnia. Cui omnia unum sunt, quique ad unum omnia trahit et omnia in uno videt, potest stabilis corde esse."—THOMAS A KEMPIS.

I.

WHEN poppies fired the nut-brown wheat,
 My love went by with sun-stained feet :
 I followed her laughter, followed her, followed her, all a
 summer's morn !
 But oh, from an elfin palace of air,
 A wild bird sang a song so rare,
 I stayed to listen and—lost my Fair,
 And walked the world forlorn.

II.

When chalk shone white between the sheaves,
 My love went by as one that grieves.
 I followed her weeping, followed her, followed her, all an
 autumn noon !
 The sunset flamed so fierce a red
 From north to south—I turned my head
 To wonder—and my Fair was fled
 Beyond the dawning moon.

III.

When bare black boughs were choked with snow,
 My love went by, as long ago.
 I followed her, dreaming, followed her, followed her, all
 a winter's night !
 But oh, along that snow-white track
 With thorny shadows printed black,
 I saw three kings come riding back,
 And—lost my life's delight.

IV.

They are so many, and she but One ;
 And I and she, like moon and sun
 So separate ever ! Ah yet, I follow her, follow her, faint
 and far ;
 For what if all this diverse bliss
 Should run together in one kiss !
 Swift, Spring, with the sweet clue I miss
 Between these several instances,—
 The kings, that inn, that star.

V.

Between the hawk's and the wood-dove's wing,
 My love, my love flashed by like Spring !
 The year had finished its golden ring !
 Earth, the Gipsy, and Heaven, the King,
 Were married like notes in the song I sing,
 And oh, I followed her, followed her, followed her over
 the hills of Time.
 Never to lose her now I know
 For whom the sun was clasped in snow,
 The heights linked to the depths below,
 The rose's flush to the planet's glow,
 Death the friend to life the foe,
 The Winter's joy to the Spring's woe,
 And the world made one in a rhyme.

BEAUTY IN DARKNESS.

BEAUTY in darkness,
 Ivory-white,
 Sleeps like the secret
 Heart of the night.

Night may be boundless,
 Formless as death.
 Here the white-breasted one
 Still draws breath.

Music that vanished
 At eve, on the air,
 Silently slumbers
 Till daybreak here.

Here, at the heart
 Of my universe, glows
 Exquisite, absolute,
 Love's deep rose.

THE ISLE OF MEMORIES.

WAS it so in Old England, when kings went to war ?
 Did the cottages grow silent, as the lads went away,
 Leaving all they loved so, the wan face of the mother,
 The lips of the young wives, the grey head and the
 golden,
 While birds, in the blackthorn, made ready for the may ?

It was even so, even so in Old England.
 The homesteads were emptied of happiness and laughter.
 The fields were forsaken. The lanes grew lonely.
 A shadow veiled the sun. A sea-mist of sorrows
 Drifted like a dream through the old oak-forest,
 Flowed through our valleys, and filled them with visions,
 Brooded on our mountains and crowned them with
 remembrance,
 So that many a wanderer from the shining of the West
 Finds a strange darkness in the heart of our land.

Long, long since, in the days of the cross-bow,
 Unknown armies from the forge and the farm,
 Bought us these fields in the bleakness of death.
 The may-boughs budded with the same brief glory ;
 And, sweetening all the air, in a shower of wet petals,
 The blackbird shook them, with to-day's brave song.
 His note has not changed since the days of Piers Plow-
 man.

The star has not changed that, as curfew chimed,
 In the faint green fields of the sky, like a primrose
 Woke, and looked down, upon lovers in the lanes.

Their wild thyme to-night shall be crushed into sweetness,
On the crest of the downs where, dark against the crimson,
Dark, dark as death, on the crimson of the afterglow,
Other lovers wander on the eve of farewell,
Other lovers whisper and listen to the sea.

It was even so, even so in Old England.
In all this bleak island there is hardly an acre,
Hardly a gate, or a path upon the hillside,
Hardly a woodland, that has not heard or seen them
Whispering good-bye, or waving it for ever.

This rain-drenched, storm-rocked earth we adore,
These ripening orchards, these fields of thick wheat
Rippling into grey light and shadow as the wind blows ;
These dark rich ploughlands, dreaming in the dusk,
Whose breath in our nostrils is better than life ;
This isle of green hedgerows and deep rambling lanes ;
This cluster of old counties that have mellowed through
the ages,
Like apples in autumn on a grey apple-tree ;
Those moorlands of Cornwall, those mountains of
Cumberland,
Ferry coombs of Devonshire and gardens of Kent ;
Those russet roofs of Sussex, those farms and faint spires,
Those fields of known flowers, whose faces, whose
fragrance,
Even in this darkness, recall our lost childhood,
Sleep like our own children, and cherish us like angels,—
All these are ours, because of the forgotten.

RESURRECTION.

WHEN all the altar lights were dead,
 And mockery choked the world's desire ;
 When every faith on earth had fled,
 A spirit rose on wings of fire.

He rose and sang. I never heard
 A song of such ecstatic breath ;
 And, though I caught no throbbing word,
 I knew that he had conquered death.

He sang no comfortable things ;
 But as a shaft had pierced him through ;
 And the dark stain between his wings
 Grew darker as the glory grew.

He sang the agonies of loss ;
 Of dumb farewells, and love's last kiss.
 He sang in heaven as on a cross,
 A spirit crucified with bliss.

Over these ruined shrines he rose,
 These crumbling graves where all men grope,
 Racked by the universal throes,
 And singing the eternal hope.

EARLY POEMS.

SHERWOOD.

SHERWOOD in the twilight, is Robin Hood awake ?
 Grey and ghostly shadows are gliding through the brake,
 Shadows of the dappled deer, dreaming of the morn,
 Dreaming of a shadowy man that winds a shadowy horn.

Robin Hood is here again : all his merry thieves
 Hear a ghostly bugle-note shivering through the leaves,
 Calling as he used to call, faint and far away,
 In Sherwood, in Sherwood, about the break of day.

Merry, merry England has kissed the lips of June :
 All the wings of fairyland were here beneath the moon,
 Like a flight of rose-leaves fluttering in a mist
 Of opal and ruby and pearl and amethyst.

Oaken-hearted England is waking as of old,
 With eyes of blither hazel and hair of brighter gold :
 For Robin Hood is here again beneath the bursting spray
 In Sherwood, in Sherwood, about the break of day.

Love is in the greenwood building him a house
 Of wild rose and hawthorn and honeysuckle boughs :
 Love is in the greenwood, dawn is in the skies,
 And Marian is waiting with a glory in her eyes.

Hark ! The dazzled laverock climbs the golden steep !
 Marian is waiting : is Robin Hood asleep ?

Round the fairy grass-rings, frolic elf and fay,
In Sherwood, in Sherwood, about the break of day.

Oberon, Oberon, rake away the gold,
Rake away the red leaves, roll away the mould,
Rake away the gold leaves, roll away the red,
And wake Will Scarlett from his leafy forest bed.

Friar Tuck and Little John are riding down together
With quarter-staff and drinking-can and grey goose
feather.

The dead are coming back again, the years are rolled
away

In Sherwood, in Sherwood, about the break of day.

Softly over Sherwood the south wind blows.
All the heart of England hid in every rose
Hears across the greenwood the sunny whisper leap,
Sherwood in the red dawn, is Robin Hood asleep?

Hark, the voice of England wakes him as of old
And, shattering the silence with a cry of brighter gold
Bugles in the greenwood echo from the steep,
Sherwood in the red dawn, is Robin Hood asleep?

Where the deer are gliding, down the shadowy glen,
All across the glades of fern he calls his merry men—
Doublets of the Lincoln green glancing through the may
In Sherwood, in Sherwood, about the break of day—

Calls them and they answer : from aisles of oak and ash
Rings the *Follow ! Follow !* and the boughs begin to
crash,

The ferns begin to flutter and the flowers begin to fly,
And through the crimson dawning the robber band goes
by.

Robin ! Robin ! Robin ! All his merry thieves
Answer as the bugle-note shivers through the leaves,
Calling as he used to call, faint and far away,
In Sherwood, in Sherwood, about the break of day.

A TRIPLE BALLAD OF OLD JAPAN.

IN Old Japan, by creek and bay,
 The blue plum-blossoms blow,
 Where birds with sea-blue plumage gay
 Thro' sea-blue branches go :
 Dragons are coiling down below
 Like dragons on a fan ;
 And pig-tailed sailors lurching slow
 Thro' streets of Old Japan.

There, in the dim blue death of day
 Where white tea-roses grow,
 Petals and scents are strewn astray
 Till night be sweet enow,
 Then lovers wander whispering low
 As only lovers can,
 Where ros'y paper lanterns glow
 Thro' streets of Old Japan.

From Wonderland to Yea-or-Nay
 The junks of Weal-and-Woe
 Dream on the purple water-way
 Nor ever meet a foe ;
 Though still, with stiff mustachio
 And crookéd ataghan,
 Their pirates guard with pomp and show
 The ships of Old Japan.

That land is very far away,
 We lost it long ago !
 No fairies ride the cherry spray,
 No witches mop and mow,

The violet wells have ceased to flow ;
And oh, how faint and wan
The dawn on Fusi-yama's snow,
The peak of Old Japan.

Half smilingly our hearts delay,
Half mournfully forego
The blue fantastic twisted day
When faithful Konojo,
For small white Lily Hasu-ko
Knelt in the Butsudan,
And her tomb opened to bestow
Lilies thro' Old Japan.

There was a game they used to play
I' the San-ju-san-jen Dō,
They filled a little lacquer tray
With powders in a row,
Dry dust of flowers from Tashiro
To Mount Daimugenzan,
Dry little heaps of dust, but oh,
They breathed of Old Japan.

Then knights in blue and gold array
Would on their thumbs bestow
A pinch from every heap and say,
With many a *hum* and *ho*,
What blossoms, nodding to and fro
For joy of maid or man,
Conceived the scents that puzzled so
The brains of Old Japan.

The hundred ghosts have ceased to affray
The dust of Kyotó,
Ah yet, what phantom blooms a-sway
Murmur, a-loft, a-low,
In dells no scythe of death can mow,
No power of reason scan,
Oh, what Samúrai singers know
The Flower of Old Japan ?

Dry dust of blossoms, dim and gray,
Lost on the wind? Ah, no,
Hark, from yon clump of English may,
A cherub's mocking crow,
A sudden twang, a sweet, swift throe,
As Daisy trips by Dan,
And careless Cupid drops his bow
And laughs—from Old Japan.

*There, in the dim blue death of day
Where white tea-roses grow,
Petals and scents are strewn astray
Till night be sweet enow,
Then lovers wander, whispering low
As only lovers can,
Where rosy paper lanterns glow
Thro' streets of Old Japan.*

THE FOREST OF WILD THYME.

*DEDICATED TO
HELEN, ROSAMUND, AND BEATRIX.*

PERSONS OF THE TALE.

OURSELVES.	THE HIDEOUS HERMIT.
FATHER.	THE KING OF FAIRY-LAND.
MOTHER.	PEASE-BLOSSOM.
LITTLE BOY BLUE.	MUSTARD-SEED.

Dragons, Fairies, Mammoths, Angels, &c.

APOLOGIA.

ONE more hour to wander free
 As Puck on his unbridled bee
 Thro' heather-forests, leagues of bloom,
 Our childhood's maze of scent and sun !
 Forbear awhile your notes of doom,
 Dear critics, give me still this one
 Swift hour to hunt the fairy gleam
 That flutters thro' the unfettered dream.

It mocks me as it flies, I know.
 All too soon the gleam will go ;
 Yet I love it and shall love
 My dream that brooks no narrower bars
 Than bind the darkening heavens above,
 My Jack-o'-lanthorn of the stars :
 Then, I'll follow it no more,
 I'll light the lamp. I'll close the door

PRELUDE.

HUSH ! if you remember how we sailed to Old Japan,
Peterkin was with us then, our little brother Peterkin !
Now we've lost him, so they say. I think the tall thin
man
Must have come and touched him with his curious
twinkling fan
And taken him away again, our merry little Peterkin.
He'll be frightened all alone ; we'll find him if we can.
Come and look for Peterkin, poor little Peterkin.

No one would believe us if we told them what we know,
Or they wouldn't grieve for Peterkin, merry little
Peterkin.
If they'd only watched us roaming through the streets of
Miyako,
And travelling in a palanquin where parents never go,
And seen the golden gardens where we wandered once
with Peterkin,
And smelt the purple orchards where the cherry-blossoms
blow,
They wouldn't mourn for Peterkin, merry little Peter-
kin.

Put away your muskets, lay aside the drum,
Hang it by the wooden sword we made for little
Peterkin !
He was once our trumpeter. Now his bugle's dumb.
Pile your arms beneath it, for the owlet light is come.
We'll wander through the roses where we marched of
old with Peterkin,
We'll search the summer sunset where the Hybla bee-
hives hum,
And—if we meet a fairy there—we'll ask for news of
Peterkin.

He was once our cabin-boy and cooked the sweets for tea ;

And oh, we've sailed around the world with laughing little Peterkin.

From nursery floor to pantry door we've roamed the mighty sea,

And come to port below the stairs in distant Caribee,

But wheresoe'er we sailed we took our little lubber Peterkin,

Because his wide gray eyes believed much more than ours could see,

And so we liked our Peterkin, our trusty little Peterkin.

Peterkin, Peterkin, I think if you came back

The captain of our host to-day should be the bugler Peterkin,

And he should lead our smugglers up that steep and narrow track,

A band of noble brigands, bearing each a mighty pack

Crammed with lace and jewels to the secret cave of Peterkin,

And he should wear the biggest boots and make his pistol crack,—

The Spanish cloak, the velvet mask, we'd give them all to Peterkin.

Come, my brother pirates. I am tired of play.

Come and look for Peterkin, little brother Peterkin.

Our merry little comrade that the fairies took away,

For people think we've lost him, and when we come to say

Our good-night prayers to mother, if we pray for little Peterkin

Her eyes are very sorrowful, she turns her head away.

Come and look for Peterkin, merry little Peterkin.

God bless little Peterkin, wherever he may be !

Come and look for Peterkin, lonely little Peterkin.

I wonder if they've taken him again across the sea

From the town of Wonder-Wander and the Amfalula tree
To the land of many marvels where we roamed of old
with Peterkin,
The land of blue pagodas and the flowery fields of tea !
Come and look for Peterkin, poor little Peterkin.

PART I.—THE SPLENDID SECRET.

Now father stood engaged in talk
With mother on that narrow walk
Between the laurels (where we play
At Red-skins lurking for their prey)
And the grey old wall of roses
Where the Persian kitten dozes
And the sunlight sleeps upon
Crannies of the crumbling stone.
—So hot it is you scarce can bear
Your naked hand upon it there,
Though there luxuriating in heat
With a slow and gorgeous beat
White-winged currant-moths display
Their spots of black and gold all day.—

Well, since we greatly wished to know
Whether we too might some day go
Where little Peterkin had gone
Without one word and all alone,
We crept up through the laurels there
Hoping that we might overhear
The splendid secret, darkly great,
Of Peterkin's mysterious fate ;
And on what high adventure bound
He left our pleasant garden-ground,
Whether for old Japan once more
He voyaged from the dim blue shore,
Or whether he set out to run
By candle-light to Babylon,

We just missed something father said
About a young prince that was dead,
A little warrior that had fought
And failed : how hopes were brought to nought
He said, and mortals made to bow

Before the Juggernaut of Death,
And all the world was darker now,

For Time's grey lips and icy breath
Had blown out all the enchanted lights
That burned in Love's Arabian nights ;
And now he could not understand
Mother's mystic fairy-land,

' Land of the dead, poor fairy-tale,'
He murmured, and her face grew pale,
And then with great soft shining eyes
She leant to him—she looked so wise—
And, with her cheek against his cheek,
We heard her, ah so softly, speak.

' Once—once—there was a happier day,
When with clear eyes you used to say
The secret of the whole dark world
Within the Smallest Flower was furled,
As in a Temple, deep and sweet,
Where all the hosts of heaven could meet.
Is heaven a fairy-tale ? ' she said.

He looked at her, and bent his head.
Yet *we* could never understand
Why heaven should *not* be fairy-land,
A part of heaven at least, and why
The thought of it made mother cry,
And why they went away so sad,

And father still quite unforgiven,
For what could children be but glad
To find a fairy-land in heaven ?

And as we talked it o'er we found
Our brains were really spinning round ;
But Dick, our eldest, late returned
From school, by all the lore he'd learned

Declared that we should seek the lost
Smallest Flower at any cost.
For, since within its leaves lay furled
The secret of the whole wide world,
He thought that we might learn therein
The whereabouts of Peterkin ;
And, if we found the Flower, we knew
Father would be forgiven, too ;
And mother's kiss atone for all
The sadness by the rose-hung wall ;
We knew not how, we knew not why,
But Dick it was who bade us try.
Dick made it all seem plain and clear,
And Dick it is who helps us here
To tell this tale of fairy-land
In words we scarce can understand.
For ere another golden hour
Had passed, our anxious parents found
We'd left the scented garden-ground
To seek—the Smallest Flower.

PART II.—THE FIRST DISCOVERY.

OH, grown-ups cannot understand
And grown-ups never will,
How short's the way to fairy-land
Across the purple hill.
They smile. Their smile is very bland,
Their eyes are wise and chill ;
And yet—at just a child's command—
The world's an Eden still.

Under the cloudy lilac-tree,
Out at the garden-gate,
We stole, a little band of three,
To tempt our fairy fate.
There was no human eye to see,
No voice to bid us wait ;
The gardener had gone home to tea,
The hour was very late.

I wonder if you've ever dreamed,
In summer's noonday sleep,
Of what the thyme and heather seemed
To ladybirds that creep
Like small black-spotted crimson gems
Between the tiny twisted stems
Of fairy forests deep ;
Or what it looks like as they pass
Through jungles of the golden grass.

If you could suddenly become
As small a thing as they,
A midget-child, a new Tom Thumb,
A little gauze-winged fay,
Oh then, as through the mighty shades
Of wild thyme woods and violet glades
You groped your forest-way,
How fraught each fragrant bough would be
With dark o'erhanging mystery.

How high the forest aisles would loom,
What wondrous wings would beat
Through gloamings loaded with perfume
In many a rich retreat,
While trees like purple censers bowed
And swung beneath a swooning cloud
Mysteriously sweet,
Where flowers that haunt no mortal clime
Burden the Forest of Wild Thyme.

We'd watched the bats and beetles flit
Through sunset-coloured air
The night that we discovered it
And all the heavens were bare :
We'd seen the colours melt and pass
Like silent ghosts across the grass
To sleep—our hearts knew where ;
And so we rose, and hand in hand
We sought the gates of fairy-land.

For Peterkin, O Peterkin,
The cry was in our ears,
An elfin clamour, clear and thin
From lands beyond the years ;
A wistful note, a dying fall
As of the bird-like bugle-call
A haunted changeling hears,
And pines within his mortal home
Once more across the fern to roam.

We left behind the pleasant row
Of cottage window-panes,
The village inn's red-curtained glow,
The lovers in the lanes ;
And stout of heart and strong of will
We climbed the purple perfumed hill,
And hummed the sweet refrains
Of fairy tunes the tall thin man
Taught us of old in Old Japan.

Then, by the churchyard path we found
That foolish stone which said
Our Peterkin was sleeping sound
As in his own small bed ;
And yet—it could not tell us where
To find him now, in earth or air,
Or blue sky overhead . . .
It was a splendid place for play,
That churchyard, on a summer's day ;

A splendid place for hide-and-seek
Between the gray old stones ;
Where even grown-ups used to speak
In awestruck whispering tones ;
And here and there the grass ran wild
In jungles for the creeping child,
And there were elfin zones
Of twisted flowers and words in rhyme
And great sweet cushions of wild thyme.

So in a wild thyme snuggerly there
We stayed awhile to rest.
A bell was calling folk to prayer.
One star was in the West.
The cottage lights grew far away.
The whole sky seemed to waver and sway
Above our fragrant nest ;
And from a distant dreamland moon
Once more we heard that fairy tune.

Why, mother once had sung it us
When, ere we went to bed,
She told the tale of Pyramus,
How Thisbe found him dead
And mourned his eyes as green as leeks,
His cherry nose, his cowslip cheeks.

That tune would oft around us float
Since on a golden noon
We saw the play that Shakespeare wrote
Of Lion, Wall, and Moon ;
Ah, hark—the ancient fairy theme—
Following darkness like a dream !

The very song Will Shakespeare sang,
The music that through Sherwood rang
And Arden and that forest glade
Where Hermie and Lysander strayed,
And Puck cried out with impish glee,
Lord, what fools these mortals be !

Though the masquerade was mute
Of Quince and Snout and Snug and Flute,
And Bottom with his donkey's head
Decked with roses, white and red,
Though the elf-kind had forsaken
Sherwood now and faintly shaken
The forest-scents from off their feet,
Yet from some divine retreat
Came the music, sweet and clear,
To chime upon the raptured ear

With the free unfettered sway
Of harebells in the moon of May :
Moved by an elfin air that knows
A bank whereon the wild thyme blows.

Out of the undiscovered land
So sweetly rang the song,
We dreamed we wandered, hand in hand,
The fragrant aisles along,
Where long ago had gone to dwell
In some enchanted distant dell
The outlawed fairy throng
When out of Sherwood's wildest glen
They sank, forsaking mortal men.

And as we dreamed, the shadowy ground
Seemed gradually to swell ;
And a strange forest rose around,
But how—we could not tell.
Purple against a rose-red sky
The big boughs brooded silently.
Far off we heard a bell ;
And, suddenly, a great red light
Smouldered before our startled sight.

Then came a cry, a fiercer flash,
And down between the trees
We saw great crimson figures crash,
Wild-eyed monstrosities ;
Great dragon shapes that breathed a flame
From roaring nostrils as they came.
We sank upon our knees.
Like armoured fire-men, ten feet high,
With buckets of dew they bumped by.

And then, as down that mighty dell
We followed, faint with fear,
We understood the tolling bell
That called the monsters there ;

For right in front we saw a house
Woven of wild mysterious boughs
Bursting out everywhere
In crimson flames, and with a shout
The monsters rushed to put it out.

And, in a flash, the truth was ours.
We knew, at once,—we knew—
The meaning of those trees like flowers,
Those boughs of rose and blue,
And from the world we'd left above
A voice came crooning like a dove
To prove the dream was true :
And this—we knew it by the rhyme
Must be—the Forest of Wild Thyme,

For out of the mystical rose-red dome
Of heaven the voice came murmuring down :
Oh, Ladybird, Ladybird, fly away home ;
Your house is on fire and your children are gone.

We knew, we knew it by the rhyme,
Though *we* seemed, after all,
No tinier, yet the stalks of thyme
Towered like a forest tall
All round us ; oh, we knew not how,
And yet—we knew those monsters now :
Our dream's divine recall
Had dwarfed us, as with magic words ;
The dragons were but ladybirds !

And all around us as we gazed,
Half glad, half frightened, all amazed,
The scented clouds of purple smoke
In lurid gleams of crimson broke ;
And o'er our heads the huge black trees
Obscured the sky's red mysteries ;
While here and there gigantic wings
Beat o'er us, and great scaly things

Fold over monstrous leathern fold
Out of the smouldering copses rolled ;
And eyes like blood-red pits of flame
From many a forest-cavern came
To glare across the blazing glade,
Till, with the sudden thought dismayed,
We wondered if we e'er should find
The mortal home we'd left behind.
Fear clutched us in a grisly grasp.
We gave one wild and white-lipped gasp,
Then turned and ran, with streaming hair,
Away, away, and anywhere !

And hurry-skurry, heart and heel and hand, we tore
along,

And still our flying feet kept time and tune for little
Peterkin.

For Peterkin, O Peterkin, it made a kind of song
To prove the road was right although it seemed so dark
and wrong,

As through the desperate woods we plunged and
ploughed for little Peterkin,

Where many a hidden jungle-beast made noises like a
gong

That rolled and roared and rumbled as we rushed
along to Peterkin.

Peterkin, Peterkin, if you could only hear

And answer us ; one little word from little lonely
Peterkin

To take and comfort father. He is sitting in his chair
In the library : he's listening for your footstep on the
stair

And your patter down the passage. He can only think
of Peterkin.

Come back, come back to father, for to-day he'd let us
tear

His newest book to make a paper-boat for little Peter-
kin.

PART III.—THE HIDEOUS HERMIT.

AH, what wonders round us rose
When we dared to pause and look,
Curious things that seemed all toes,
Goblins from a picture-book ;
Ants like witches, four feet high,
Waving all their skinny arms,
Glared at us and wandered by,
Muttering their ancestral charms.

Stately forms in green and gold
Armour strutted through the glades,
Just as Hamlet's ghost, we're told,
Mooned among the midnight shades :
Once a sort of devil came
Scattering broken trees about,
Winged with leather, eyed with flame,—
He was but a moth, no doubt.

Here and there, above us clomb
Feathery clumps of palm on high :
Those were ferns, of course, but some
Towered as though to touch the sky.
Once, across a fragrant glade,
Listening as we onward stole,
Half delighted, half afraid,
Dong, we heard the hare-bells toll !

Something told us what that gleam
Down the glen was brooding o'er ;
Something told us in a dream
What the bells were tolling for !
Something told us there was fear,
Horror, peril, on our way !
Was it far or was it near ?
Near, we heard the night-wind say.

Near ; and once or twice we saw
Something like a monstrous eye,
Something like a hideous claw
Steal between us and the sky.
Still we hummed a dauntless tune,
Trying to think such things might be
Glimpses of the fairy moon
Hiding in some hairy tree.

Yet around us as we went
Through the glades of rose and blue
Sweetness with the horror blent
Wonder-wild in scent and hue.
Here Aladdin's cavern yawned,
Jewelled thick with gorgeous dyes.
There a head of clover dawned
Like a cloud in eastern skies.

Hills of topaz, lakes of dew,
Fairy cliffs of crystal sheen
Passed we ; and the forest's blue
Sea of branches tossed between.
Once we saw a gryphon make
One soft iris as it passed
Like the curving meteor's wake
O'er the forest, far and fast.

Winged with purple, breathing flame,
Crimson-eyed we saw him go,
Where—ah ! could it be the same
Dragon-fly we used to know ?—
Valley-lilies overhead,
High aloof in clustered spray,
Far through heaven their splendour spread,
Glimmering like the Milky Way.

Mammoths father calls " extinct,"
Creatures that the cave-men feared,
Through that forest walked and blinked,
Through that jungle crawled and leered.

Beasts no Nimrod ever knew,
Woolly bears in black and red,
Crocodiles,—we wondered who
Ever dared to see *them* fed.

Were they lizards? If they were,
They could swallow *us* with ease;
But they slumbered quietly there
In among the mighty trees.
Red and silver, blue and green,
Played the moonlight on their scales.
Golden eyes they had, and lean
Crookéd legs with cruel nails.

Yet again, oh, faint and far,
Came the shadow of a cry,
Like the calling of a star
To its brother in the sky;
Like an echo in a cave
Where young mermen sound their shells,
Like the wind across a grave
Bright with scent of lily-bells.

Like an elfin hunter's horn
Pealing up a rocky glen
Welcome to a rosier morn
And the fairy quest again:
Then, all round it surged a song
We could never understand,
Though it lingered with us long,
And it seemed so sad and grand.

SONG.

*Little Boy Blue, you are gallant and brave.
There was never a doubt in those clear bright eyes.
Come, challenge the grim dark Gates of the Grave
As the skylark sings to those infinite skies!
This world is a dream, say the old and the wise,
And its rainbows arise o'er the false and the true;
But the mists of the morning are made of our sighs,—
Ah, shatter them, scatter them, Little Boy Blue!*

*Little Boy Blue, if the child-heart knows,
 Sound but a note as a little one may ;
 And the thorns of the desert shall bloom with the rose,
 And the Healer shall wipe all tears away.
 Little Boy Blue, we are all astray,
 The sheep's in the meadow, the cow's in the corn.
 Ah, set the world right, as a little one may.
 Little Boy Blue, come blow up your horn !*

There, between the shadowy trees
 Circled with a misty gleam
 Like the light a mourner sees
 Round an angel in a dream ;
 Was it he ? Oh, brave and slim,
 Straight and clad in airy blue,
 Lifting to his lips the dim
 Golden horn ? We never knew !

Never ; for a witch's hair
 Flooded all the moonlit sky,
 And he vanished, then and there,
 In the twinkling of an eye.
 Just as either boyish cheek
 Puffed to set the world aright,
 Ere the golden horn could speak
 Round him flowed the purple night.

*Toll ; and through the woods once more
 Stole we, drenched with fragrant dew.
 Toll ; the hare-bell's burden bore
 Deeper meanings than we knew.
 Still it told us there was fear,
 Horror, peril on our way !
 Was it far or was it near ?
 Near, we heard the night-wind say !*

At last we came to a round black road
 That tunnelled through the woods and showed,
 Or so we thought, a good clear way
 Back to the upper lands of day.

Great silken cables overhead
In many a mighty mesh were spread
Netting the rounded arch, no doubt
To keep the weight of leafage out.
And, as the tunnel narrowed down,
So thick and close the cords had grown
No leaf could through their meshes stray,
And the faint moonlight died away.
Only a strange grey glimmer shone
To guide our weary footsteps on,
Until, tired out, we stood before
The end, a great grey silken door.

Then from out a weird old wicket, overgrown with shaggy
hair

Like a weird and wicked eyebrow round a weird and
wicked eye,

Two great eyeballs and a beard

For one ghastly moment peered

At our faces with a sudden stealthy stare :

Then the door was opened wide,

And a hideous hermit cried

With a shy and soothing smile from out his lair,

*Won't you walk into my complex ? I can make you cosy
there !*

And we couldn't quite remember where we'd heard that
phrase before,

As the great grey-bearded ogre stood beside his open
door ;

But an echo seemed to answer from a land beyond the
sky—

Won't you walk into my parlour ? said the spider to the fly.

Then we looked a little closer at the ogre as he stood
With his great red eyeballs glowing like two torches in a
wood,

And his mighty speckled belly and his dreadful clutching
claws,

And his nose—a horny parrot's beak, his whiskers and his
jaws ;

Yet his voice was sympathetic, and we saw two tears
descend,

As he murmured " I'm so ugly, but I've lost my dearest
friend !

I tell you most lymphatic'ly, I've yearnings in my
soul,"—

And right along his parrot's beak we saw the teardrops
roll.

*He's an arrant sentimentalist, we heard a distant sigh,
Won't you weep upon my bosom ? said the spider to the fly.*

" If you'd dreamed my dreams of beauty, if you'd seen
my works of art,

If you'd felt the cruel hunger that is gnawing at my
heart,

And the grief that never leaves me and the love I can't
forget,

(For I loved with all the letters in the Chinese alphabet !)

Oh, you'd all come in to comfort me. You ought to help
the weak ;

And I'm full of melting moments ; and—I—know—the—
thing—you—seek ! "

And the haunting echo answered, " *Well, I'm sure you
ought to try ;*

There's a duty to one's neighbour," said the spider to the fly.

So we walked into his parlour

Though a gleam was in his eye ;

And it *was* the prettiest parlour

That ever we did spy !

But we saw by the uncertain

Misty light, shot through with gleams

Of many a silken curtain

Broidered o'er with dreadful dreams,

That he locked the door behind us ! So we stood with
bated breath

In a silence deep as death.

There were scarlet gleams and crimson
 In the curious foggy gray,
 Like the blood-red light that swims on
 Old canals at fall of day,
 Where the smoke of some great city loops and droops in
 gorgeous veils
 Round the heavy purple barges' tawny sails.

Were those creatures gagged and muffled
 See—there—by that severed head ?
 Was it but a breeze that ruffled
 Those dark curtains, splashed with red,
 Ruffled the dark figures on them, made them moan like
 things in pain ?
 How we wished that we were safe at home
 again.

.

" Oh, we want to hear of Peterkin. Good sir, you say you
 know ;
 Won't you tell us, won't you put us in the way we want to
 go ? "
 So we pleaded, for he seemed so very full of sighs and
 tears
 That we couldn't doubt his kindness, and we smothered
 all our fears.
 But he said, " You must be crazy if you come to me for
 help.
 Why should I desire to send you to your horrid little
 whelp ? "
 And again the foolish echo made a far away reply,
*" Oh, don't come to me for comfort,
 Pray don't look to me for comfort,
 Heavens ! you mustn't be so selfish," said the spider to the fly.*

" Still, when the King of Scotland, so to speak, was in a
 hole,
 He was aided by my brother. It's a story to console
 The convict on the treadmill and the infant with a sum,
 For it teaches you to try again until your kingdom's
 come !

The monarch dawdled in that hole for centuries of time
Until my own twin-brother rose and showed him how to
climb.

He showed him how to swing and sway upon a tiny
thread

Across a mighty precipice, and light upon his head
Without a single fracture and without a single pain
If he only did it frequently and tried and tried again."
And once again the whisper like a moral wandered by,
"Perseverance is a virtue," said the spider to the fly.

Then he moaned, " My heart is hungry ; but I fear I
cannot eat.

(Of course I speak entirely now of spiritual meat !)
For I only fed an hour ago, but if we calmly sat
While I told you all my troubles in a confidential chat
It would give me *such* an appetite to hear you sympathise,
And I should sleep the better—see, the tears are in my
eyes !

Dead yearnings are such dreadful things, let's keep 'em
all alive,—

Let's sit and talk awhile, my dears. We'll dine, I think,
at five."

And he brought his chair beside us in his most engaging
style,

And began to tell his story with a melancholy smile.—

" You remember Miss Muffet
Who sat on a tuffet
Partaking of curds and whey ;
Well, *I* am the spider
Who sat down beside her
And frightened Miss Muffet away !

There was nothing against her !
An elderly spinster
Were such a grammatical mate
For a spider and spinner,
I swore I would win her,
I knew I had met with my fate !

That love was the purest
 And strongest and surest
 I'd felt since my first thread was spun.
 I know I'm a bogey,
 But *she's* an old fogey,
 So why in the world did she run ?

When Bruce was in trouble,
 A spider, my double,
 Encouraged him greatly, they say !
 Now, *why* should the spider
 Who sat down beside her
 Have frightened Miss Muffet away ? "

He seemed to have much more to tell,
 But we could scarce be listening well,
 Although we tried with all our might
 To look attentive and polite ;
 For still afar we heard the thin
 Elfin call to Peterkin.
 Clear as a skylark's mounting song
 It drew our wandering thoughts along.
 Afar, it seemed, yet, ah, so nigh.
 Deep in our dreams it scaled the sky.
 In captive dreams that brooked no bars
 It touched the love that moves the stars,
 And with sweet music's golden tether
 It bound our hearts and heaven together.

SONG.

*Wake, arise, the lake, the skies
 Fade into the faëry day ;
 Come and sing before our king,
 Heed not Time, the dotard gray.
 Time has given his crown to heaven
 Ah, how long ? Awake, away !*

Then, as the Hermit rambled on
 In one long listless monotone,

We heard a wild and mournful groan
Come rumbling down the tunnelled way ;
A voice, an awful mournful bray,
Singing some old funereal lay.
Then solemn footsteps, muffled, dull,
Approached as if they trod on wool,
And as they nearer, nearer drew,
We saw our Host was listening too !

His bulging eyes began to glow
Like great red match-heads rubbed at night,
And then he stole with a grim " O-ho ! "
To that gray old wicket where, out of sight,
Blandly rubbing his hands and humming,
He could see, at one glance, whatever was coming.

He had never been so jubilant or frolicsome before,
As he scurried on his cruel hairy crutches to the door ;
And flung it open wide
And most hospitably cried,
" Won't you walk into my parlour ? I've some little
friends to tea,—
They'll be highly entertaining to a man of sympathy,
Such as you yourself must be ! "

Then the man, for so he seemed,
(Doubtless one who'd lost his way
And was dwarfed as we had been !)
In his ancient suit of black,
Black upon the verge of green,
Entered like a ghost that dreamed
Sadly of some bygone day ;
And he never ceased to sing
In that awful mournful bray.

The door closed behind his back.
He walked round us in a ring,
And we hoped that he might free us,
But his tears appeared to blind him,

For he didn't seem to see us,
 And the Hermit crept behind him
 Like a cat about to spring.
 And the song he sang was this ;
 And his nose looked very grand
 As he sang it, with a bliss
 Which we could not understand ;
 For his voice was very sad,
 While his nose was proud and glad.

*Rain, April, rain, thy sunny, sunny tears !
 Through the black boughs the robe of Spring appears,
 Yet, for the ghosts of all the bygone years,
 Rain, April, rain.*

*Rain, April, rain. The rose will soon be glad.
 Spring will rejoice, a Spring I, too, have had.
 A little while, till I no more be sad,
 Rain, April, rain.*

And then the spider sprang
 Before we could breathe or speak,
 And one great scream out-rang
 As the terrible horny beak
 Crunched into the Sad Man's head,
 And the terrible hairy claws
 Clutched him around his middle ;
 And he opened his lantern-jaws,
 And he gave one twist, one twiddle,
 One kick, and his sorrow was dead.

And there, as he sucked his bleeding prey,
 The spider leered at us—" You will do,
 My sweet little dears, for another day ;
 But this is the sort I like ; huh ! huh ! "

And there we stood, in frozen fear,
 Whiter than death,
 With bated breath ;

And lo ! as we thought of Peterkin,
 Father and home and Peterkin,
 Once more that music clear and thin,
 Clear as a skylark's mounting song,
 But nearer now, more sweet, more strong,
 Drew all our wandering thoughts along,
 Until it seemed, a mystic sea
 Of hidden delight and harmony
 Began to ripple and rise all round
 The prison where our hearts lay bound ;
 And from sweet heaven's most rosy rim
 There swelled a distant marching hymn
 Which made the hideous Hermit pause
 And listen with lank down-dropt jaws,
 Till, with great bulging eyes of fear,
 He sought the wicket again to peer
 Along the tunnel, as like sweet rain
 We heard the still approaching strain,
 And, under it, the rhythmic beat
 Of multitudinous marching feet. . . .
 Nearer, nearer, they rippled and rang,
 And this was the marching song they sang :—

SONG.

*A fairy band are we
 In fairy-land.
 Singing march we, hand in hand ;
 Singing, singing all day long.
 (Some folk never heard a fairy-song !)*

*Singing, singing,
 When the merry thrush is swinging
 On a springing spray ;
 Or when the witch that lives in gloomy caves
 And creeps by night among the graves
 Calls a cloud across the day.
 Cease we never our fairy song,
 March we ever, along, along,
 Down the dale, or up the hill,
 Singing, singing still.*

And suddenly the Hermit turned and ran with all his
might

Through the back-door of his parlour as we thought of
little Peterkin ;

And the great grey roof was shattered by a shower of rosy
light,

And the spider-house went floating, torn and tattered
through the night

In a flight of shining streamers, as a shout went up for
Peterkin ;

And lo, the glistening fairy-host stood there arrayed for
fight,

In arms of rose and green and gold, to lead us on to
Peterkin.

And all around us, rippling like a pearl and opal sea,

The host of fairy faces winked a kindly hint of Peterkin ;

And all around the rosy glade a laugh of fairy glee

Watched spider-streamers floating up from fragrant tree
to tree

Till the moonlight caught the gossamers and, Oh, we
wished for Peterkin !

Each rope became a rainbow ; but it made us ache to see

Such a fairy forest-pomp without explaining it to
Peterkin.

Then all the glittering crowd

With a courtly gesture bowed

Like a rosy jewelled cloud

Round a flame,

As the King of Fairy-land,

Very dignified and grand,

Stepped forward to demand

Whence we came.

He'd a cloak of gold and green

Such as caterpillars spin,

For the fairy ways, I ween,

Are very frugal.

He'd a bow that he had borne
Since the crimson Eden morn,
And a honeysuckle horn
For his bugle.

So we told our tale of faëry to the King of Fairy-land,
And asked if he could let us know the latest news of
Peterkin ;

And he turned him with a courtly smile and waved his
jewelled wand

And cried, *Pease-blossom, Mustard-seed ! You know the
old command.*

*Well ; these are little children. You must lead them on
to Peterkin.*

Then he knelt. The King of Faëry knelt ; his eyes were
great and grand

As he took our hands and kissed them, saying,
Father loves your Peterkin !

So out they sprang, on either side,
A light fantastic fairy guide,
To lead us to the land unknown
Where little Peterkin was gone ;
And, as we went with timid pace,
We saw that every fairy face
In all that moonlit host was wet
With tears. We never shall forget
The mystic hush that seemed to fade
Away like sound, as down the glade
We passed beyond their zone of light.
Then through the forest's purple night
We trotted, at a pleasant speed,
With gay Pease-blossom and Mustard-seed.

PART IV.—PEASE-BLOSSOM AND
MUSTARD-SEED.

SHYLY we surveyed our guides,
As through the gloomy woods we went,
In the light that the straggling moonbeams lent.

We envied them their easy strides !

Pease-blossom, with his crimson cap
And delicate suit of rose-leaf green,
His crimson sash and his jewelled dagger,
Strutted along with an elegant swagger
Which showed that he didn't care one rap

For anything less than a Fairy Queen.

His eyes were deep like the eyes of a poet,

Although his crisp and curly hair
Certainly didn't seem to show it !

While Mustard-seed was a devil-may-care
Epigrammatic and pungent fellow

Clad in a splendid suit of yellow,
With emerald stars on his glittering breast

And eyes that shone with a diamond light.

They made you feel sure it would always be best

To tell him the truth ; he was not perhaps *quite*
So polite as Pease-blossom, but then who could be
Quite such a debonair fairy as he ?

We never could tell you one half that we heard
And saw on that journey. For instance, a bird
Ten times as big as an elephant stood
By the side of a nest like a great thick wood.
The clouds in glimmering wreaths were spread
Behind its vast and shadowy head
Which rolled at us trembling below. (Its eyes
Were like great black moons in those pearl-pale skies.)
And we feared he might take us, perhaps, for a worm.

But he ruffled his breast with the sound of a storm,
And snuggled his head with a careless disdain
Under his huge hunched wing again ;

And Mustard-seed said, as we stole thro' the dark,
There was nothing to fear : it was only a Lark !

And so he cheered the way along
With many a neat little epigram,
While gay Pease-blossom before him swam
On a billow of lovely moonlit song,
Telling us why they had left their home
In Sherwood, and had hither come
To dwell in this magical scented clime,
This dim old Forest of sweet Wild Thyme.

" Men toil," he said, " from morn till night
With bleeding hands and blinded sight
For gold, more gold ! They have betrayed
The trust that in their souls was laid.
Their fairy birthright they have sold
For little disks of mortal gold ;
And now they cannot even see
The gold upon the greenwood tree,
The wealth of coloured lights that pass
In soft gradations through the grass,
The riches of the love untold
That wakes the day from gray to gold ;
And howsoe'er the moonlight weaves
Magic webs among the leaves
Englishmen care little now
For elves beneath the hawthorn bough.
Nor if Robin should return
Dare they of an outlaw learn ;
For them the Smallest Flower is furled.
Mute is the music of the world,
And unbelief has driven away
Beauty from the blossomed spray."

Then Mustard-seed with diamond eyes
Taught us to be laughter-wise,
And he showed us how that Time
Was much less powerful than a rhyme ;
And that Space was but a dream ;
" For look," he said, with eyes agleam,

“ Now you are become so small
You think the Thyme a forest tall ;
But underneath your feet you see
A world of wilder mystery
Where, if you were smaller yet,
You would just as soon forget
This forest, which you'd leave above
As you have left the home you love !
For, since the Thyme you used to know
Seems a forest here below,
What if you should sink again
And find there stretched a mighty plain
Between each grass-blade and the next ?
You'd think till you were quite perplexed !
Especially if all the flowers
That lit the sweet Thyme-forest bowers
Were in that wild transcendent change
Turned to Temples, great and strange,
With many a pillared portal high
And domes that swelled against the sky !
How foolish, then, you will agree,
Are those who think that all must see
The world alike, or those who scorn
Another who, perchance, was born
Where—in a different dream from theirs—
What they call sins to him are prayers !
We cannot judge. We cannot know.
All things mingle. All things flow.
There's only one thing constant here—
Love—that untranscended sphere :
Love, that while all ages run
Holds the wheeling worlds in one ;
Love, that, as your sages tell,
Soars to heaven and sinks to hell.”

Even as he spoke, we seemed to grow
Smaller, the Thyme trees seemed to go
Farther away from us : new dreams
Flashed out on us with mystic gleams
Of mighty Temple-domes. Deep awe
Held us all breathless as we saw

A carven portal glimmering out
 Between new flowers that put to rout
 Our other fancies. In sweet fear
 We tiptoed past, and seemed to hear
 A sound of singing from within
 That told our souls of Peterkin.
 Our thoughts of *him* were still the same
 Howe'er the shadows went and came !
 So, on we wandered, hand in hand,
 And all the world was elfin-land.

.
 Then we came through a glittering crystal grot
 By a path like a pale moonbeam,
 And a broad blue bridge of Forget-me-not
 Over a strange dark stream,
 To where, through the deep blue dusk, a gleam
 Rose like the soul of the setting sun ;
 A sunset breaking through the earth,
 A crimson sea of the poppies of dream
 Deep as the sleep that gave them birth
 In the night where all earthly dreams are done.

And then, like a pearl-pale porch of the moon,
 Faint and sweet as a starlit shrine,
 Over the gloom
 Of the crimson bloom
 We saw the Gates of Ivory shine ;
 And, lulled and lured by the lullaby tune
 Of the cradling airs that drowsily creep
 From blossom to blossom, and lazily croon
 Through the heart of the midnight's mystic noon,
 We came to the Gates of the City of Sleep.

Faint and sweet as a lily's repose
 On the broad black breast of a midnight lake,
 The City delighted the cradling night.
 Like a straggling palace of cloud it rose.
 Its towers were crowned with a crystal light
 Like the starry crown of a white snowflake

As they pierced in a wild white pinnacled crowd,
Through the dusky wreaths of enchanted cloud
That swirled all round like a witch's hair.

And we heard, as the sound of a great sea sighing,
The sigh of the sleepless world of care ;
And we saw strange shadowy figures flying
Up to the Ivory Gates and beating
With pale hands, long and famished and thin.
Like blinded birds we saw them dash
Against the cruelly gleaming wall.
We heard them wearily moan and call
With sharp starved lips for ever entreating
The pale doorkeeper to let them in.
And still, as they beat, again and again,
We saw on the moon-pale lintels a splash
Of crimson blood like a poppy-stain
Or a wild red rose from the gardens of pain
That sigh all night like a ghostly sea
From the City of Sleep to Gethsemane

And then, as we neared that mighty crowd
An old blind man came, crying aloud
To greet us, as once the blind man cried
In the Bible picture—you know we tried
To paint that print, with its Eastern sun ;
But the reds and the yellows *would* mix and run,
And the blue of the sky made a horrible mess
Right over the edge of the Lord's white dress.

And the old blind man, just as though he had eyes,
Came straight to meet us ; and all the cries
Of the crowd were hushed ; and a strange sweet calm
Stole through the air like a breath of the balm
That was wafted abroad from the Forest of Thyme
(For it rolled all round that curious clime
With its magical clouds of perfumed trees).
And the blind man cried, " Our help is at hand,
O, brothers, remember the old command,
Remember the frankincense and myrrh,
Make way, make way for those little ones there.

Make way, make way, I have seen them afar
 Under a great white Eastern star ;
 For I am the mad blind man who sees ! ”
 Then he whispered, softly—*Of such as these . . .*
 And through the hush of the cloven crowd
 We passed to the gates of the City, and there
 Our fairy heralds cried aloud—
Open your gates. Don't stand and stare.
These are the children for whom our King
Made all the star-worlds dance in a ring !

At once, like a sorrow that melts from the heart
 In tears, the slow gates melted apart ;
 And into the City we passed like a dream ;
 And then, in one splendid marching stream
 The whole of that host came following through.

We were only children, just like you ;
 Children, ah, but we felt so grand
 As we led them—although we could understand
 Nothing at all of the wonderful song
 That rose all round as we marched along.

SONG.

You that have seen how the world and its glory
Change and grow old like the love of a friend ;
You that have come to the end of the story,
You that were tired ere you came to the end ;
You that are weary of laughter and sorrow,
Pain and pleasure, labour and sin,
Sick of the midnight and dreading the morrow,
Ah, come in ; come in.

You that are bearing the load of the ages ;
You that have loved overmuch and too late ;
You that confute all the saws of the sages ;
You that served only because you must wait,
Knowing your work was a wasted endeavour ;
You that have lost and yet triumphed therein,
Add loss to your losses and triumph for ever ;
Ah, come in ; come in.

And we knew as we went up that twisted street,
 With its violet shadows and pearl-pale walls,
 We were coming to Something strange and sweet,
 For the dim air echoed with elfin calls ;
 And, far away, in the heart of the City,
 A murmur of laughter and revelry rose,—
 A sound that was faint as the smile of Pity,
 And sweet as a swan-song's golden close.

And then, once more, as we marched along,
 There surged all round us that wonderful song ;
 And it swung to the tramp of our marching feet ;
 But ah, it was tenderer now and so sweet
 That it made our eyes grow wet and blind,
 And the whole wide world seem mother-kind,
 Folding us round with a gentle embrace,
 And pressing our souls to her soft sweet face.

SONG.

*Dreams—dreams—ah, the memory blinding us,
 Blinding our eyes to the way that we go ;
 Till the new sorrow come, once more reminding us
 Blindly of tears that have long ceased to flow.
 Mother-mine, whisper we, yours was the love for me !
 Still, though our paths lie lone and apart,
 Yours is the true love, shining above for me,
 Yours are the kind eyes, hurting my heart.*

*Dreams—dreams—ah, how shall we sing of them,
 Dreams that we loved with our head on her breast.
 Dreams—dreams—and the cradle-sweet swing of them ;
 Ay, for her voice was the sound we loved best.
 Can we remember at all or, forgetting it,
 Can we recall for a moment the gleam
 Of our childhood's delight and the wonder begetting it,
 Wonder awakened in dreams of a dream ?*

And, once again, from the heart of the City
 A murmur of tenderer laughter rose,
 A sound that was faint as the smile of Pity,
 And sweet as a swan-song's golden close ;

And it seemed as if some wonderful Fair
 Were charming the night of the City of Dreams,
 For, over the mystical din out there,
 The clouds were coloured with flickering gleams,
 And a roseate light like the day's first flush
 Quivered and beat on the towers above,
 And we heard through the curious crooning hush
 An elfin song that we used to love.

Little Boy Blue, come blow up your horn . . .
 And the soft wind blew it the other way ;
 And all that we heard was—*Cow's in the corn ;*
 But we never heard anything half so gay !
 And ever we seemed to be drawing nearer
 That mystical roseate smoke-wreathed glare,
 And the curious music grew louder and clearer,
 Till *Mustard-seed* said, " We are lucky, you see,
 We've arrived at a time of festivity ! "

And so to the end of the street we came,
 And turned a corner, and—there we were,
 In a place that glowed like the dawn of day,
 A crowded clamouring City square
 Like the cloudy heart of an opal aflame
 With the lights of a great Dream-Fair.
 Thousands of children were gathered there,
 Thousands of old men, weary and gray,
 And the shouts of the showmen filled the air—
 This way ! This way ! This way !

And *See-saw ; Margery Daw ;* we heard a rollicking shout,
 As the swing-boats hurtled over our heads to the tune of
 the roundabout ;
 And *Little Boy Blue, come blow up your horn,* we heard
 the showmen cry,
 And *Dickory Dock, I'm as good as a clock,* we heard the
 swings reply.

This way, this way to your Heart's Desire ;
 Come, cast your burdens down ;
 And the pauper shall mount his throne in the skies,
 And the king be rid of his crown ;

And souls that were dead shall be fed with fire
 From the fount of their ancient pain,
 And your lost love come with the light in her eyes
 Back to your heart again.

Ah, here be sure she shall never prove
 Less kind than her eyes were bright.
 This way, this way to your old lost love,
 You shall kiss her lips to-night.
 This way for the smile of a dead man's face
 And the grip of a brother's hand.
 This way to your childhood's heart of grace
 And your home in Fairy-land.

Dickory Dock, I'm as good as a clock, d'you hear my
swivels chime ?
 To and fro as I come and go, I keep eternal time.
 O, little Bo-peep, if you've lost your sheep and don't
 know where to find 'em,
 Leave 'em alone and they'll come home, and carry their
 tails behind 'em.

And *See-saw ; Margery Daw ;* there came the chorussing
 shout,
 As the swing-boats answered the roaring tune of the
 rollicking roundabout ;
 Dickory, dickory, dickory, dock, d'you hear my swivels
 chime ?
 Swing ; swing ; you're as good as a king if you keep
 eternal time.

Then we saw that the tunes of the world were one ;
 And the metre that guided the rhythmic sun
 Was at one, like the ebb and the flow of the sea,
 With the tunes that we learned at our mother's knee ;
 The beat of the horse-hoofs that carried us down
 To see the fine Lady of Banbury Town ;
 And so, by the rhymes that we knew, we could tell
 Without knowing the others—that all was well.

And then our brains began to spin ;
For it seemed as if that mighty din
Were no less than the cries of the poets and sages
Of all the nations in all the ages ;
And, if they could only beat out the whole
Of their music together, the guerdon and goal
Of the world would be reached with one mighty shout,
And the dark dread secret of Time be out.
And nearer, nearer they seemed to climb,
And madder and merrier rose the song,
And the swings and the see-saws marked the time ;
For this was the maddest and merriest throng
That ever was met on a holy-day
To dance the dust of the world away ;
And madder and merrier, round and round
The whirligigs whirled to the whirling sound,
Till it seemed that the mad song burst its bars
And mixed with the song of the whirling stars,
The song that the rhythmic Time-Tides tell
To seraphs in Heaven and devils in Hell ;
All, all the songs of the world in chime
With the universal rhythm and rhyme
Were nearing the secret of Space and Time ;
The song of that ultimate mystery
Which only the mad blind men who see,
Led by the laugh of a little child,
Can utter ; ay, wilder and yet more wild
It maddened, till now—it was out, it was out !
Full song from the starry roundabout—

And—just as it seemed that the sky must split
With the infinite flash and the thunder of it,
Oh, stranger than thunder, from deep to deep,
The wheel of the whole world spun to sleep,
For the round of the wheel so swiftly was run
That the swift and the still were wedded and one,
One silent music from pole to pole,
And man's heart one with the heart of the whole,
In a song like a light in the soul, unheard,
But clear as the joy in the cry of a bird :

*A child was born in Bethlehem, in Bethlehem, in Bethlehem !
A child was born in Bethlehem ! Ah, hear my fairy fable ;
For I have seen the King of Kings, no longer thronged with
angel wings,
But croodling like a little babe, and cradled in a stable.*

*The wise men came to greet him with their gifts of myrrh
and frankincense.
Gold and myrrh and frankincense they brought to make
him mirth ;
And would you know the way to win to little brother Peterkin,
My childhood's heart shall guide you through the glories
of the earth.*

*A child was born in Bethlehem, in Bethlehem, in Bethlehem !
The wise men came to welcome him. A star stood o'er the
gable ;
And there they saw the King of Kings, no longer thronged
with angel wings,
But croodling like a little babe, and cradled in a stable.*

And creeping through the music once again the fairy cry
Came tingling o'er the snowy towers to lead us on to
Peterkin.

Once more the fairy bugles blew from lands beyond the
sky,

And we all groped out together, dazed and blind, we
knew not why.

Out through the City's farther gates we went to look
for Peterkin ;

Out, out into the dark Unknown, and heard the clamour
die

Far, far away behind us as we trotted on to Peterkin.

Then once more along the rare
Forest-paths we groped our way.
Here the glow-worm's league-long glare
Turned the Wild Thyme night to day.
There we passed a sort of whale
Sixty feet in length or more,
But we knew it was a snail
Even when we heard it snore.

Often through the glamorous gloom
Almost on the top of us
We beheld a beetle loom
Like a hippopotamus.
Once or twice a spotted toad
Like a mountain wobbled by
With a rolling moon that glowed
Through the skin-fringe of its eye.

Once a caterpillar bowed
Down a leaf of Ygdrasil
Like a sunset-coloured cloud
Sleeping on a quiet hill :
Once we came upon a moth
Fast asleep with outspread wings,
Like a mighty tissued cloth
Woven for the feet of kings.

There above the woods in state
Many a temple dome that glows
Delicately like a great
Rainbow-coloured bubble rose :
Though they were but flowers on earth,
Oh, we dared not enter in,
Knowing, in that strange re-birth
Less than awe were more than sin !

Yet their mystic anthems came
Sweetly to our listening ears ;
And their burden was the same—
“ No more sorrow, no more tears !
Whither Peterkin has gone
You, assuredly, shall go.
When your wanderings are done,
All he knows you, too, shall know ! ”

So we thought we'd onward roam
Till earth's Smallest Flower appeared,
With a less tremendous dome,
Less divinely to be feared :

Then, perchance, if we should dare
Timidly to enter in,
Someone who was kneeling there
Might have news of Peterkin.

At last we saw a crimson porch
Far away, like a dull red torch
Burning in the purple gloom ;
And a great ocean of perfume
Rolled round us as we drew anear,
And then we strangely seemed to hear
The shadow of a mighty psalm,
A sound as if a golden sea
Of music swung in utter calm
Against the shores of Eternity ;
And then we saw a dreaming dome
And walls that did not seem to tower
So high ; and knew that we had come,
At last, to that sweet House of Grace
Which wise men find in every place—
The Temple of the Smallest Flower.

And there—alas—our fairy friends
Whispered, “ Here our kingdom ends.
You must enter in alone,
But your souls will surely show
Whither Peterkin is gone
And the road that you must go.
We, poor fairies, have no souls !
Hark, the warning hare-bell tolls ; ”
So “ Good-bye, good-bye,” they said,
“ Dear little seekers-for-the-dead.”

They vanished. Ah, but as they went
We heard their voices softly blent
In a still unearthly song
That seemed to make us wise and strong.
For it was like the holy calm
That fills the bosomed rose with balm,
Or blessings that the twilight breathes
Where the honeysuckle wreathes

Between young lovers and the sky
 As on banks of flowers they lie ;
 And with wings of rose and green
 Elfin children pass unseen,
 Singing their sweet lullaby,—

We shall walk with them on earth

When we pass the gates of birth,

Die to live, and live to die.

Though they cannot see us now,

Kiss them, once, on cheek and brow.

Then, good-night, with lullaby.

Only a flower ? Those carven walls,
 Those cornices and coronals,
 The splendid crimson porch, the thin
 Strange sounds of singing from within . . .

Through the scented arch we stept,
 Pushed back the soft petallic door,
 And down the velvet aisles we crept.
 Was it a Flower—no more ?

For one of the voices that we heard,
 A child's voice, clear as the voice of a bird,
 Was it not ?—nay, it could not be !
 And a woman's voice that tenderly
 Answered him in fond refrain,
 And pierced our hearts with sweet sweet pain,
 As if dear Mary-mother hung
 Above some little child, and sung
 Between the waves of that golden sea
 The cradle-songs of Eternity ;
 And, while in her deep smile he basked,
 Answered whatsoe'er he asked.

What is there hid in the heart of a rose,

Mother-mine ?

Ah, who knows, who knows ?

A man that died on a lonely hill

May tell you, perhaps, but none other will,

Little child.

*What does it take to make a rose,
 Mother-mine ?
 The God that died to make it knows
 It takes the world's eternal wars,
 It takes the moon and all the stars,
 It takes the might of heaven and hell
 And the everlasting Love as well,
 Little child.*

But there, in one strange shrine apart
 Within the Temple's holiest heart,
 We came upon a blinding light,
 Suddenly, and a burning throne
 Of pinnacled glory, wild and white.
 We could not see Who reigned thereon ;
 For, all at once, as a wood-bird sings,
 The aisles were full of great white wings
 Row above mystic burning row ;
 And through the splendour and the glow
 We saw four angels, great and sweet,
 With outspread wings and folded feet,
 Come gliding down from a heaven within
 The golden heart of Paradise ;
 And in their hands, with laughing eyes,
 Lay little brother Peterkin.

And all around the Temple of the Smallest of the Flowers
 The glory of the angels made a star for little Peterkin ;
 For all the Kings of Splendour and all the Heavenly
 Powers
 Were gathered there together in the fairy forest bowers
 With all their globed and radiant wings to make a star
 for Peterkin,
 The star that shone upon the East, a star that still is ours,
 Whene'er we hang our stockings up, a star of wings for
 Peterkin.

Then all, in one great flash, was gone—
 A voice cried, " Hush, all's well ! "
 And we stood dreaming there, alone,
 In darkness. Who can tell

The mystic quiet that we felt,
As if the woods in worship knelt
Far off we heard a bell
Tolling strange human folk to prayer
Through fields of sunset-coloured air.

Then we heard footsteps, faint and far,
And—as it seemed—we woke.
Remembered skies, great star by star
Upon our vision broke.
Field over field of heavenly blue
Rose over us ; then a voice we knew
Softly and gently spoke—
“ See, they are sleeping by the side
Of that dear little one—who died.”

PART V.—THE HAPPY ENDING.

WE told dear father all our tale
That night before we went to bed,
And at the end his face grew pale,
And he bent over us and said
He too, he too, had wandered there
A long and lonely watch to keep
Before the gates of the City of Sleep ;
But, till we came, he did not dare
Even to dream of entering in,
Or even to hope for Peterkin.
He was the poor blind man, he said,
And we—how low he bent his head !
Then he called mother near ; and low
He whispered to us—“ Prompt me now ;
For I forget that song we heard,
But you remember every word.”
Then memory came like a breaking morn,
And we breathed it to him—*A child was born !*
And there he drew us to his breast
And softly murmured all the rest.—

*The wise men came to greet him with their gifts of myrrh
and frankincense.*

*Gold and myrrh and frankincense they brought to make
him mirth ;*

*And would you know the way to win to little brother Peter-
kin,*

*My childhood's heart shall guide you through the glories
of the earth.*

Then he looked up and mother knelt
Beside us. Oh, her eyes were bright !
Her arms were like a lovely belt
All round us as we said good-night
To father : *he* was crying now,
But they were happy tears, somehow ;
For there we saw dear mother lay
Her cheek against his cheek and say—
“ Hush, let me kiss those tears away.”

THE BARREL-ORGAN.

THERE'S a barrel-organ carolling across a golden street
 In the City as the sun sinks low ;
 With a silvery cry of linnets in its dull mechanic beat,
 As it dies into the sunset-glow ;
 And it pulses through the pleasures of the City and the
 pain
 That surround the singing organ like a large eternal
 light ;
 And they've given it a glory and a part to play again
 In the Symphony that rules the day and night.

 And now it's marching onward through the realms of old
 romance,
 And trolling out a fond familiar tune,
 And now it's roaring cannon down to fight the King of
 France,
 And now it's prattling softly to the moon,
 And all around the organ there's a sea without a shore
 Of human joys and wonders and regrets ;
 To remember and to recompense the music evermore
 For what the cold machinery forgets. . . .

Yes ; as the music changes,
 Like a prismatic glass,
 It takes the light and ranges
 Through all the moods that pass ;
 Dissects the common carnival
 Of passions and regrets,
 And gives the world a glimpse of all
 The colours it forgets.

And there *La Traviata* sighs
 Another sadder song ;
 And there *Il Trovatore* cries
 A tale of deeper wrong ;
 And bolder knights to battle go
 With sword and shield and lance,
 Than ever here on earth below
 Have whirled into—*a dance* !—

Go down to Kew in lilac-time, in lilac-time, in lilac-time.
 Go down to Kew in lilac-time (it isn't far from London !)

And you shall wander hand in hand with love in summer's wonderland.

Go down to Kew in lilac-time (it isn't far from London !)

The cherry-trees are seas of bloom and soft perfume and sweet perfume,

The cherry-trees are seas of bloom (and oh, so near to London !)

And there they say, when dawn is high and all the world's a blaze of sky,

The cuckoo, though he's very shy, will sing a song for London.

The Dorian nightingale is rare, and yet they say you'll hear him there

At Kew, at Kew in lilac-time (and oh, so near to London !)

The linnet and the throstle, too, and after dark the long halloo

And golden-eyed *tu-whit, tu-whoo*, of owls that ogle London.

For Noah hardly knew a bird of any kind that isn't heard

At Kew, at Kew in lilac-time (and oh, so near to London !)

And when the rose begins to pout and all the chestnut spires are out

You'll hear the rest without a doubt, all chorussing for London :—

*Come down to Kew in lilac-time, in lilac-time, in lilac-time ;
 Come down to Kew in lilac-time (it isn't far from
 London !)*
*And you shall wander hand in hand with love in summer's
 wonderland ;*
*Come down to Kew in lilac-time (it isn't far from
 London !)*

And then the troubadour begins to thrill the golden street,
 In the City as the sun sinks low ;
 And in all the gaudy busses there are scores of weary feet
 Marking time, sweet time, with a dull mechanic beat,
 And a thousand hearts are plunging to a love they'll
 never meet,
 Through the meadows of the sunset, through the poppies
 and the wheat,
 In the land where the dead dreams go.

So it's Jeremiah, Jeremiah,
 What have *you* to say
 When you meet the garland girls
 Tripping on their way ?

All around my gala hat
 I wear a wreath of roses
 (A long and lonely year it is
 I've waited for the May !)
 If any one should ask you,
 The reason why I wear it is—
 My own love, my true love is coming to-day.

And it's buy a bunch of violets for the lady
(It's lilac-time in London! It's lilac-time in London!)
 Buy a bunch of violets for the lady
 While the sky burns blue above.

On the other side the street you'll find it shady
(It's lilac-time in London! It's lilac-time in London!)
 But buy a bunch of violets for the lady,
 And tell her she's your own true love.

There's a barrel-organ carolling across a golden street
 In the City as the sun sinks glittering and slow ;
 And the music's not immortal ; but the world has made
 it sweet
 And enriched it with the harmonies that make a song
 complete
 In the deeper heavens of music where the night and
 morning meet,
 As it dies into the sunset-glow ;
 And it pulses through the pleasures of the City and the
 pain
 That surround the singing organ like a large eternal
 light,
 And they've given it a glory and a part to play again
 In the Symphony that rules the day and night.

And there, as the music changes,
 The song runs round again.
 Once more it turns and ranges
 Through all its joy and pain,
 Dissects the common carnival
 Of passions and regrets ;
 And the wheeling world remembers all
 The wheeling song forgets.

Once more *La Traviata* sighs
 Another sadder song.
 Once more *Il Trovatore* cries
 A tale of deeper wrong.
 Once more the knights to battle go
 With sword and shield and lance
 Till once, once more, the shattered foe
 Has whirled into—a dance !

Come down to Kew in lilac-time, in lilac-time, in lilac-time.
 Come down to Kew in lilac-time (it isn't far from
 London !)
 And you shall wander hand in hand with love in summer's
 wonderland.
 Come down to Kew in lilac-time (it isn't far from
 London !)

FORTY SINGING SEAMEN.

"In our lands be Beers and Lyons of dyvers colours as ye redd, grene, black, and white. And in our land be also unicornes and these Unicornes slee many Lyons. . . . Also there dare no man make a lye in our lande, for if he dyde he sholde incontynent be sleyn."—*Mediæval Epistle of Pope Prester John*.

I.

ACROSS the seas of Wonderland to Mogadore we plodded,
 Forty singing seamen in an old black barque,
 And we landed in the twilight where a Polyphemus
 nodded
 With his battered moon-eye winking red and yellow
 through the dark !
 For his eye was growing mellow,
 Rich and ripe and red and yellow,
 As was time, since old Ulysses made him bellow in the
 dark !
Cho.—Since Ulysses bunged his eye up with a pine-
 torch in the dark !

II.

Were they mountains in the gloaming or the giant's ugly
 shoulders
 Just beneath the rolling eyeball, with its bleared and
 vinous glow,
 Red and yellow o'er the purple of the pines among the
 boulders
 And the shaggy horror brooding on the sullen slopes
 below,

Were they pines among the boulders
Or the hair upon his shoulders ?

We were only simple seamen, so of course we didn't
know.

Cho.—We were simple singing seamen, so of course we
couldn't know.

III.

But we crossed a plain of poppies, and we came upon a
fountain

Not of water, but of jewels, like a spray of leaping fire ;
And behind it, in an emerald glade, beneath a golden
mountain

There stood a crystal palace, for a sailor to admire ;

For a troop of ghosts came round us,

Which with leaves of bay they crowned us,

Then with grog they wellnigh drowned us, to the depth
of our desire !

Cho.—And 'twas very friendly of them, as a sailor can
admire !

IV.

There was music all about us, we were growing quite
forgetful

We were only singing seamen from the dirt of London-
town,

Though the nectar that we swallowed seemed to vanish
half regretful

As if we wasn't good enough to take such vittles down,

When we saw a sudden figure,

Tall and black as any nigger,

Like the devil—only bigger—drawing near us with a
frown !

Cho.—Like the devil—but much bigger—and he wore a
golden crown !

V.

And "what's all this?" he growls at us! With dignity
we chaunted,

"Forty singing seamen, sir, as won't be put upon!"
"What? Englishmen?" he cries, "Well, if ye don't
mind being haunted,

Faith, you're welcome to my palace. I'm the famous
Prester John!

Will ye walk into my palace?

I don't bear 'ee any malice!

One and all ye shall be welcome in the halls of Prester
John!"

Cho.—So we walked into the palace and the halls of
Prester John!

VI.

Now the door was one great diamond and the hall a
hollow ruby—

Big as Beachy Head, my lads, nay bigger by a half!
And I sees the mate wi' mouth agape, a-staring like a
booby,

And the skipper close behind him, with his tongue out
like a calf!

Now the way to take it rightly

Was to walk along politely

Just as if you didn't notice—so I couldn't help but
laugh!

Cho.—For they both forgot their manners and the crew
was bound to laugh!

VII.

But he took us through his palace and, my lads, as I'm
a sinner,

We walked into an opal like a sunset-coloured cloud.

"My dining-room," he says, and, quick as light we saw a
dinner

Spread before us by the fingers of a hidden fairy
crowd;

And the skipper, swaying gently
 After dinner, murmurs faintly,
 " I looks towards you, Prester John, you've done us
 very proud ! "

Cho.—And we drank his health with honours, for he
done us very proud !

VIII.

Then he walks us to his garden where we sees a feathered
 demon
 Very splendid and important on a sort of spicy tree !
 " That's the Phoenix," whispers Prester, " which all
 eddicated seamen
 Knows the only one existent, and *he's* waiting for to
 flee !
 When his hundred years expire
 Then he'll set hisself a-fire
 And another from his ashes rise most beautiful to
 see ! "

Cho.—With wings of rose and emerald most beautiful to
 see !

IX.

Then he says, " In yonder forest there's a little silver
 river,
 And whosoever drinks of it, his youth shall never die !
 The centuries go by, but Prester John endures for ever
 With his music in the mountains and his magic on the
 sky !
 While *your* hearts are growing colder,
 While *your* world is growing older,
 There's a magic in the distance, where the sea-line
 meets the sky."

Cho.—It shall call to singing seamen till the fount o'
 song is dry !

X.

So we thought we'd up and seek it, but that forest fair
defied us.

First a crimson leopard laughs at us most horrible to
see.

Then a sea-green lion came and sniffed and licked his
chops and eyed us,

While a red and yellow unicorn was dancing round a
tree !

We was trying to look thinner,

Which was hard, because our dinner

Must ha' made us very tempting to a cat o' high
degree !

Cho.—Must ha' made us very tempting to the whole
menarjeree !

XI.

So we scuttled from that forest and across the poppy
meadows

Where the awful shaggy horror brooded o'er us in the
dark !

And we pushes out from shore again a-jumping at our
shadows,

And pulls away most joyful to the old black barque !

And home again we plodded

While the Polyphemus nodded

With his battered moon-eye winking red and yellow
through the dark.

Cho.—Oh, the moon above the mountains, red and yellow
through the dark !

XII.

Across the seas of Wonderland to London-town we
blundered,

Forty singing seamen as was puzzled for to know
If the visions we had seen was caused by—here again we
pondered—

A tippie in a vision forty thousand years ago.

Could the grog we *dreamt* we swallowed

Make us *dream* of all that followed?

We were only simple seamen, so of course we didn't
know!

Cho.—We were simple singing seamen, so of course we
could not know!

THE HIGHWAYMAN.

PART ONE.

I.

THE wind was a torrent of darkness among the gusty
trees.

The moon was a ghostly galleon tossed upon cloudy
seas.

The road was a ribbon of moonlight over the purple
moor,

And the highwayman came riding—

Riding—riding—

The highwayman came riding, up to the old inn-door.

II.

He'd a French cocked-hat on his forehead, a bunch of
lace at his chin,

A coat of the claret velvet, and breeches of brown doe-
skin.

They fitted with never a wrinkle. His boots were up to
the thigh.

And he rode with a jewelled twinkle,

His pistol butts a-twinkle,

His rapier hilt a-twinkle, under the jewelled sky.

III.

Over the cobbles he clattered and clashed in the dark
inn-yard.
He tapped with his whip on the shutters, but all was
locked and barred.
He whistled a tune to the window, and who should be
waiting there
But the landlord's black-eyed daughter,
 Bess, the landlord's daughter,
Plaiting a dark red love-knot into her long black hair.

IV.

And dark in the dark old inn-yard a stable-wicket
creaked
Where Tim the ostler listened. His face was white and
peaked.
His eyes were hollows of madness, his hair like mouldy
hay,
But he loved the landlord's daughter,
 The landlord's red-lipped daughter.
Dumb as a dog he listened, and he heard the robber
say—

V.

“One kiss, my bonny sweetheart, I'm after a prize
to-night,
But I shall be back with the yellow gold before the
morning light ;
Yet, if they press me sharply, and harry me through
the day,
Then look for me by moonlight,
 Watch for me by moonlight,
I'll come to thee by moonlight, though hell should bar
the way.”

VI.

He rose upright in the stirrups. He scarce could reach
her hand,
But she loosened her hair in the casement. His face
burnt like a brand
As the black cascade of perfume came tumbling over his
breast ;
And he kissed its waves in the moonlight,
(Oh, sweet black waves in the moonlight !)
Then he tugged at his rein in the moonlight, and galloped
away to the west.

PART TWO.

I.

He did not come in the dawning. He did not come at
noon ;
And out of the tawny sunset, before the rise of the moon,
When the road was a gypsy's ribbon, looping the purple
moor,
A red-coat troop came marching—
Marching—marching—
King George's men came marching, up to the old inn-
door.

II.

They said no word to the landlord. They drank his ale
instead.
But they gagged his daughter, and bound her, to the
foot of her narrow bed.
Two of them knelt at her casement, with muskets at
their side !
There was death at every window ;
And hell at one dark window ;
For Bess could see, through her casement, the road
that *he* would ride.

III.

They had tied her up to attention, with many a sniggering jest.

They had bound a musket beside her, with the muzzle beneath her breast !

“ Now, keep good watch ! ” and they kissed her.

She heard the dead man say—

Look for me by moonlight ;

Watch for me by moonlight ;

I'll come to thee by moonlight, though hell should bar the way !

IV.

She twisted her hands behind her ; but all the knots held good !

She writhed her hands till her fingers were wet with sweat or blood !

They stretched and strained in the darkness, and the hours crawled by like years,

Till, now, on the stroke of midnight,

Cold, on the stroke of midnight,

The tip of one finger touched it ! The trigger at least was hers !

V.

The tip of one finger touched it. She strove no more for the rest.

Up, she stood up to attention, with the muzzle beneath her breast.

She would not risk their hearing ; she would not strive again ;

For the road lay bare in the moonlight ;

Blank and bare in the moonlight ;

And the blood of her veins, in the moonlight, throbbed to her love's refrain.

VI.

Tlot-tlot ; tlot-tlot ! Had they heard it ? The horse-hoofs
ringing clear ;
Tlot-tlot, tlot-tlot, in the distance ? Were they deaf that
they did not hear ?
Down the ribbon of moonlight, over the brow of the hill,
The highwayman came riding,
Riding, riding !
The red-coats looked to their priming. She stood up,
straight and still.

VII.

Tlot-tlot, in the frosty silence ! *Tlot-tlot,* in the echoing
night !
Nearer he came and nearer. Her face was like a light.
Her eyes grew wide for a moment ; she drew one last
deep breath,
Then her finger moved in the moonlight,
Her musket shattered the moonlight,
Shattered her breast in the moonlight and warned him
—with her death.

VIII.

He turned ; he spurred to the west ; he did not know
who stood
Bowed, with her head o'er the musket, drenched with her
own blood !
Not till the dawn he heard it, and his face grew grey to
hear
How Bess, the landlord's daughter,
The landlord's black-eyed daughter,
Had watched for her love in the moonlight, and died in
the darkness there.

IX.

Back, he spurred like a madman, shouting a curse to the
 sky,
 With the white road smoking behind him and his rapier
 brandished high.
 Blood-red were his spurs in the golden noon ; wine-red
 was his velvet coat ;
 When they shot him down on the highway,
 Down like a dog on the highway,
 And he lay in his blood on the highway, with a bunch
 of lace at his throat.

.

X.

*And still of a winter's night, they say, when the wind is in
 the trees,
 When the moon is a ghostly galleon tossed upon cloudy seas,
 When the road is a ribbon of moonlight over the purple
 moor,
 A highwayman comes riding—
 Riding—riding—
 A highwayman comes riding, up to the old inn-door.*

XI.

*Over the cobbles he clatters and clangs in the dark inn-yard.
 He taps with his whip on the shutters, but all is locked
 and barred.
 He whistles a tune to the window, and who should be wait-
 ing there
 But the landlord's black-eyed daughter,
 Bess, the landlord's daughter,
 Plaiting a dark red love-knot into her long black hair.*

BUCCANEER DAYS.

THE rain's on the roof. The dark boughs tap at the pane.
 I have heaped up the fire ; and it shows me your face
 there again,
 As it shone in our cave, when we cooked our sea-perch at
 a blaze
 Of dry gorse and drift-wood, in boyhood's great buccaneer
 days.

The old cave by the fir-wood that slopes down the hill
 to the sea,
 —I remember, we smoked our first pipes there, and had
 to agree
 That either the clay was not ripe, or the 'baccy was
 damp.
 You were breaking yours in for a sailor, you said. I
 gave mine to a tramp.

In a clearing above it, one fir-tree still whispers apart
 With a magpie's big mud-plastered nest in its old crooked
 heart.
 I can still feel the smooth mottled eggs, the strange
 warmth, the new wonder ;
 The beauty, the pity, that spared our first exquisite
 plunder.

And our "eyrie,"—that nook overhung by the cliff's
 dizzy brow,
 I wonder if other young pirates are haunting it now.
 There were red pungent flowers on the brink. If I smell
 them to-day
 I am kneeling, out there, on a cliff-top, the wide world
 away.

Could Araby match them? They called them "rest-harrow" at home.

They were fringes of elfin-land there, hanging over the foam,

With magic about them, or why should that brink be so bright

With those queer little friends of my boyhood, across the long night?

I can see the brass ring of your spy-glass. How brightly it shone

As you climbed through the crisp purple thyme to our eyrie alone.

I can see the smooth sun-burn that darkened our faces and hands

As we gazed at the merchantmen sailing away to those palm-shadowed lands.

I can hear the long sigh of the sea as we raced in the sun
To dry ourselves after our swim; hear the shout as we run

Out, again, through the waves, and ride back on the surf to the land,

To bask and grow brown on the dry drifting dunes of the sand.

Then up, in our breeches and shirts, to that buccaneer glow

In the cave. Is it true we grow old? Is the fire sinking low?

Come! You shall be chief. We'll not quarrel. The time flies so fast.

There are ships to be grappled. There's blood to be shed, ere our summer be past,—

It is winter, mid-winter! The dark boughs thresh at the pane.

Dying embers—white ashes—the windows are beaten with rain.

AT DAWN.

O HESPER-PHOSPHOR, far away
 Shining, the first, the last white star,
 Hear'st thou the strange, the ghostly cry,
 That moan of an ancient agony
 From purple forest to golden sky
 Shivering over the breathless bay ?
 It is not the wind that wakes with the day ;
 For see, the gulls that wheel and call,
 Beyond the tumbling white-topped bar,
 Catching the sun-dawn on their wings,
 Like snow-flakes or like rose-leaves fall,
 Flutter and fall in airy rings ;
 And drift, like lilies ruffling into blossom
 Upon a golden lake's unwrinkled bosom.

Are not the forest's deep-lashed fringes wet
 With tears ? Is not the voice of all regret
 Breaking out of the dark earth's heart ?
 She too, she too, has loved and lost ; and we—
 We that remember our lost Arcady,
 Have we not known, we too,
 The primal greenwood's arch of blue,
 The radiant clouds at sunrise curled
 Around the brows of the golden world ;
 The marble temples, washed with dew,
 To which with rosy limbs aflame
 The violet-eyed Thalassian came,
 Came, pitiless, only to display
 How soon the youthful splendour dies away ;
 Came, only to depart

Laughing across the gray-grown bitter sea ;
For each man's life is earth's epitome,
And though the years bring more than aught they take,
Yet might his heart and hers well break
Remembering how one prayer must still be vain,
 How one fair hope is dead,
 One passion quenched, one glory fled
With those first loves that never come again.

How many years, how many generations,
 Have heard that sigh in the dawn,
When the dark earth yearns to the unforgotten nations
 And the old loves withdrawn,
Old loves, old lovers, wonderful and unnumbered
 As waves on the wine-dark sea,
'Neath the tall white towers of Troy and the temples
 that slumbered
In Thessaly ?

From the beautiful palaces, from the miraculous portals,
 The swift white feet are flown !
They were taintless of dust, the proud, the peerless
 Immortals
 As they sped to their loftier throne !
Perchance they are there, earth dreams, on the shores of
 Hesper,
 Her rosy-bosomed Hours,
Listening the wild fresh forest's enchanted whisper,
 Crowned with its new strange flowers ;
Listening the great new ocean's triumphant thunder
 On the stainless unknown shore,
While that perilous queen of the world's delight and
 wonder
Comes white from the foam once more.

When the mists divide with the dawn o'er those glitter-
 ing waters,
Do they gaze over unoared seas—
Naiad and nymph and the woodland's rose-crowned
 daughters
And the Oceanides ?

Do they sing together, perchance, in that diamond splendour,

That world of dawn and dew,

With eyelids twitching to tears and with eyes grown tender

The sweet old songs they knew,

The songs of Greece? Ah, with harp-strings mute do they falter

As the earth like a small star pales?

When the heroes launch their ship by the smoking altar

Does a memory lure their sails?

Far, far away, do their hearts resume the story

That never on earth was told,

When all those urgent oars on the waste of glory

Cast up its gold?

Are not the forest fringes wet

With tears? Is not the voice of all regret

Breaking out of the dark earth's heart?

She too, she too, has loved and lost; and though

She turned last night in disdain

Away from the sunset-embers,

From her soul she can never depart;

She can never depart from her pain.

Vainly she strives to forget;

Beautiful in her woe,

She awakes in the dawn and remembers.

MOUNT IDA.

[This poem commemorates an event of some years ago, when a young poet—still remembered by many of his contemporaries at Oxford—went up into Mount Ida and was never seen again.]

I.

Not cypress, but this warm pine-plumage now
 Fragrant with sap, I pluck ; nor bid you weep,
 Ye Muses that still haunt the heavenly brow
 Of Ida, though the ascent is hard and steep :
 Weep not for him who left us wrapped in sleep
 At dawn beneath the holy mountain's breast
 And all alone from Ilion's gleaming shore
 Clomb the high sea-ward glens, fain to drink deep
 Of earth's old glory from your silent crest,
 Take the cloud-conquering throne
 Of gods, and gaze alone
 Thro' heaven. Darkling we slept who saw his face no
 more.

II.

But Lycidas hath found in him a brother,
 And Adonaïs will not say him nay,
 And Thyrsis to the breast of one sweet Mother
 Welcomes him, climbing by the self-same way :
 Quietly as a cloud at break of day
 Up the long glens of golden dew he stole
 (And surely Bion called to him afar !)
 The tearful hyacinths, and the greenwood spray
 Clinging to keep him from the sapphire goal,
 Kept of his path no trace !
 Upward the yearning face
 Clomb the ethereal height, calm as the morning star.

III.

Incline to earth, dear Sisters, or my song
 That with the light wings of the skimming swallow
 Must range the reedy slopes, will work him wrong !
 And with some golden shaft do thou, Apollo,
 Show the pine-shadowed path that none may follow ;
 For, as the blue air shuts behind a bird,
 Round him closed Ida's cloudy woods and rills !
 Day-long, night-long, by echoing height and hollow,
 We called him, but our tumult died unheard :
 Down from the scornful sky
 Our faint wing-broken cry
 Fluttered and perished among the many-folded hills.

IV.

For though we clomb each faint-flushed peak of vision,
 Nought but our own sad faces we divined.
 His radiant way still laughed us to derision,
 And still revengeful Echo proved unkind ;
 And oft our faithless hearts half feared to find
 That cold corse in some dark mist-drenched ravine
 Where the white foam flashed headlong to the sea.
 How should we find thee, spirits deaf and blind
 Even to the things which we had heard and seen ?
 Eyes that could see no more
 The old light on sea and shore,
 What should they hope or fear to find ? They found
 not thee.

V.

For thou wast ever alien to our skies,
 A wistful stray of radiance on this earth,
 A changeling with deep memories in thine eyes
 Mistily gazing thro' our loud-voiced mirth

To some fair land beyond the gates of birth ;
 Yet, as a star thro' clouds, thou still didst shed
 Through our dark world thy lovelier, rarer glow ;
 Time, like a picture of but little worth,
 Before thy young hand lifelessly outspread,
 At one light stroke from thee
 Gleamed with Eternity ;
 Thou gav'st the master's touch, and we—we did not
 know.

VI.

Not though we gazed from heaven o'er Iliion
 Dreaming on earth below, mistily crowned
 With towering memories, and beyond her shone
 The wine-dark seas Achilles heard resound !
 Only, and after many days, we found
 Dabbled with dew, at border of a wood
 Bedded in hyacinths, open and a-glow
 Thy Homer's Iliad. . . . Dryad tears had drowned
 The rough Greek type and, as with honey or blood,
 One crocus with crushed gold
 Stained the great page that told
 Of gods that sighed their loves on Ida, long ago.

VII.

See—for a couch to their ambrosial limbs
Even as their golden load of splendour presses
The fragrant thyme, a billowing cloud up-swims
Of springing flowers beneath their deep caresses,
Hyacinth, lotus, crocus, wildernesses
Of bloom . . . but clouds of sunlight and of dew
 Dropping rich balm, round the dark pine-woods
 curled
 That the warm wonder of their inwoven tresses,
 And all the secret blisses that they knew,
 Where beauty kisses truth
 In heaven's deep heart of youth,
 Might still be hidden, as thou art, from the heartless
 world.

VIII.

Even as we found thy book, below these rocks
 Perchance that strange great eagle's feather lay,
 When Ganymede, from feeding of his flocks
 On Ida, vanished thro' the morning gray :
 Stranger it seemed, if thou couldst cast away
 Those golden musics as a thing of nought,
 A dream for which no longer thou hadst need !
 Ah, was it here then that the break of day
 Brought thee the substance for the shadow, taught
 Thy soul a swifter road
 To ease it of its load
 And watch this world of shadows as a dream recede ?

IX.

We slept ! Darkling we slept ! Our busy schemes,
 Our cold mechanic world awhile was still ;
 But oh, their eyes are blinded even in dreams
 Who from the heavenlier Powers withdraw their will.
 Here did the dawn with purer light fulfil
 Thy happier eyes than ours, here didst thou see
 The quivering wonder-light in flower and dew,
 The quickening glory of the haunted hill,
 The Hamadryad beckoning from the tree,
 The Naiad from the stream ;
 While from her long dark dream
 Earth woke, trembling with life, light, beauty, through
 and through.

X.

And the everlasting miracle of things
 Flowed round thee, and this dark earth opposed no
 bar,
 And radiant faces from the flowers and springs
 Dawned on thee, whispering, *Knowest thou whence we*
are ?

Faintly thou heardest us calling thee afar
 As Hylas heard, swooning beneath the wave,
 Girdled with glowing arms, while wood and glen
 Echoed his name beneath that rosy star ;
 And thy farewell came faint as from the grave
 For very bliss ; but we
 Could neither hear nor see ;
 And all the hill with *Hylas ! Hylas !* rang again.

XI.

But there were deeper love-*tales* for thine ears
 Than mellow-tongued Theocritus could tell :
 Over him like a sea two thousand years
 Had swept. They solemnized his music well !
 Farewell ! What word could answer but farewell,
 From thee, O happy spirit, that couldst steal
 So quietly from this world at break of day ?
 What voice of ours could break the silent spell
 Beauty had cast upon thee, or reveal
 The gates of sun and dew
 Which oped and let thee through
 And led thee heavenward by that deep enchanted way ?

XII.

Yet here thou mad'st thy choice : Love, Wisdom, Power,
 As once before young Paris, they stood here !
 Beneath them Ida, like one full-blown flower,
 Shed her bloom earthward through the radiant air,
 Leaving her rounded fruit, their beauty, bare
 To the everlasting dawn ; and, in thy palm
 The golden apple of the Hesperian isle
 Which thou must only yield to the Most Fair ;
 But not to Juno's great luxurious calm,
 Nor Dian's curved white moon,
 Gav'st thou the sunset's boon,
 Nor to foam-bosomed Aphrodite's rose-lipped smile.

XIII.

Here didst thou make the eternal choice aright,
 Here, in this hallowed haunt of nymph and faun,
 They stood before thee in that great new light,
 The three great splendours of the immortal dawn,
 With all the cloudy veils of Time withdrawn
 Or only glistening round the firm white snows
 Of their pure beauty like the golden dew
 Brushed from the feathery ferns below the lawn ;
 But not to cold Diana's morning rose,
 Nor to great Juno's frown
 Cast thou the apple down,
 And, when the Paphian raised her lustrous eyes anew,

XIV.

Thou from thy soul didst whisper—*in that heaven*
Which yearns beyond us ! Lead me up the height !
How should the golden fruit to one be given
Till your three splendours in that Sun unite
Where each in each ye move like light in light ?
How should I judge the rapture till I know
The pain ? And like three waves of music there
 They closed thee round, blinding thy blissful sight
 With beauty and, like one roseate orb a-glow,
 They bore thee on their breasts
 Up the sun-smitten crests
 And melted with thee smiling into the Most Fair.

XV.

Upward and onward, ever as ye went
 The cities of the world nestled beneath
 Closer, as if in love, round Ida, blent
 With alien hills in one great bridal-wreath

Of dawn-flushed clouds ; while, breathing with your
 breath
 New heavens mixed with your mounting bliss. Deep
 eyes,
 Beautiful eyes, imbrued with the world's tears
 Dawned on you, beautiful gleams of Love and Death
 Flowed thro' your questioning with divine replies
 From that ineffable height
 Dark, dark to mortal sight,
 Where the Ever-living dies and the All-loving hears.

XVI.

For thou hadst seen what tears upon man's face
 Bled from the heart or burned from out the brain,
 And not denied or cursed, but couldst embrace
 Infinite Paradise in the heart of pain,
 And heardst those universal choirs again
 Wherein like waves of one harmonious sea
 All our slight dreams of heaven are singing still,
 And still the throned Olympians swell the strain,
 And, hark, the burden of all—*Come unto Me !*
 Sky into deepening sky
 Melts with that one great cry ;
 And the lost doves of Ida moan on Siloa's hill.

XVII.

I gather all the ages in my song
 And send them singing up the heights to thee !
 Chord by æonian chord the stars prolong
 Their passionate echoes to Eternity :
 Earth wakes, and one orchestral symphony
 Sweeps o'er the quivering harp-strings of mankind ;
 Grief modulates into heaven, hate drowns in love,
 No strife now but of love in that great sea
 Of song ! I dream ! I dream ! And eyes grow blind :
 Chords that I not command
 Escape the fainting hand ;
 Tears fall. Thou canst not hear. Thou art still too far
 above.

XVIII.

Farewell ! What word should answer but farewell
From thee, O happy spirit, whose clear gaze
Discerned the path—clear, but unsearchable—
Where Olivet sweetens, deepens, Ida's praise,
The path that strikes as through a sunlit haze
Through Time to that clear reconciling height
Where our commingling gleams of godhead dwell ;
Strikes thro' the turmoil of our darkling days
To that great harmony where, like light in light,
Wisdom and Beauty still
Haunt the thrice-holy hill,
And Love, immortal Love . . . what answer but farewell ?

DRAKE.

EXORDIUM.

Ships and the ocean-sea ; the man who sailed it,
 Rending the veils of the west from those new worlds ;
 England, ablaze with colour ; her Devonshire lads,
 In steel and velvet, raking the Spanish Main
 For emeralds, pearls, piratical red doubloons,
 Or swaggering through the sunset into the dawn ;
 Her legends of old Cathay ; her musical inns ;
 The ring of the hammers at Rye on her new fleet ;
 The smell of the great clean sails ; the tang of the pitch,
 The hemp, the pine, on the salt wind, singing for ever
 Freedom enthroned, and all that fury of Spain.
 A proud adventure of song, a task for youth,
 And only youth to endeavour ; but since each soul
 Repeats in its own growth, from youth to age,
 All the wild struggling history of mankind,
 So now, in a golden year of dawning life,
 When blood runs hot and far horizons call,
 While colour enchants, and Gloriana's throne
 Burns like a star in the mind's unclouded sky,
 I take the challenge, attempt the enduring tale.

As once on Hispaniola's loneliest hill,
 Lost in the tropical forest's tangled maze
 Drake halted with his crew. Bravely they shone
 With musketoon and dagger ; their tawny brows
 Bound with soiled scarves of orange and sweat-stained
 blue,

They shook the sweat off, shaking the silver rings
 A-flash in their sun-bronzed ears. The lion-maned palms
 Drooped smooth crisp fans, fountains of sharp black
 shadow

Hiding the world beyond them. Bee-like birds,
 Darts of green fire, rose-tufted, needle-beaked,
 Flew by, to thrill in their curled moon-tinted target,
 A trumpet-orchid's throat. Lianas wreathed
 Their long tough cords to baffle the cutlass blades.
 A deep strange silence dreadfully besieged
 Even those mighty hearts.

Only they heard
 Cries of the painted birds, troubling the heat
 And shivering through the woods.

Behind them lay
 The old world they knew. Beyond that forest-ridge
 None guessed what worlds were hidden ; till Francis
 Drake

Unbuckled his sword, took hold on a dark-boughed tree ;
 The tallest near them, and clomb upward, branch
 By branch.

And there, as he swung clear above
 The steep-down forest, before his wondering eyes
 Mile after glamorous mile of struggling gold
 Blazed the unknown immeasurable sea.
 He hailed it, and turned home to Plymouth Sound
 With sunset-oceans plunging through his mind
 And new horizons calling. No man knew
 By what wild roads to North or South a ship
 Might enter that sea-Paradise. But Drake
 Vowed that, God helping, he would one day plough
 Those virgin waters with an English keel.

So here, above a wide invisible sea,
 In a boy's heart, another dream was born.
 Far off, he saw the sails of England's youth,
 Like sunset clouds go by—a vision lit
 With mighty prophecies, fraught with nobler dooms
 Than great Æneas knew, yet all unsung.
 Blind master of these opened eyes, be near me
 While I assay this voyage,—not in pride,

But with heart raised to a Power above my power,
And filled with it, as hearts are filled in prayer.
For he, our Devon seaman, who first sailed
The globe around, and crowned our white-cliffed isle
Against the paramount empire of the world
With that sea-glory, fought in a wider war
Even than he knew. He fought for the new faiths,
Championing our manhood as it rose
And broke its feudal chains in the face of kings.
He fought for the soul's freedom ; fought the fight
Which, though it still rings in our wondering ears
Was won then and for ever—that great war,
That last Crusade of Christ against his priests,
Wherein Spain fell, behind a thunderous roar
Of ocean-triumph, over burning ships
And shattered fleets, while England, England rose,
Her white cliffs laughing out across the waves,
Victorious over all her enemies.

And while he crowned her queen on every sea,
Her loins brought forth, her fostering bosom fed,
Souls that have swept the spiritual deep
From heaven to hell, and justified her crown.
For, round the throne of great Elizabeth,
The stainless moon of England's epic song,
The Faery Queen, in silver music moved ;
Her Ocean-shepherd, and those golden lads
Who sung the dawn in at the Mermaid Tavern
Broke through the clouds like stars ; Drayton, a gleam
Like Hesperus over westering voyagers ;
Marlowe, a fiery planet, ruddy as Mars ;
Jonson, like huge Orion ; and, over all,
The soul of Shakespeare brooding far and wide,
Lord of a realm that many an age to come
Must still leave undiscovered, unexplored.

Prosper my song then, England. If it spread
Too wide a sail, it sails for love of thee.
Three hundred years ago, three hundred years
And five long decades, on the red-rock coast
Of wooded Devon, thou didst light this flame.

There, with wild branches swaying above the cliff,
And that white witchery of the foam below,
The tree that bore the raven's matted nest
Surrendered—smooth, warm loot !—the sea-green eggs
Mottled with sea-weed brown, to the daring hand,
Lean, sunburnt, hard, of the young-eyed privateer
Who now, astride the rough dark fork of the tree,
Gazed westward, Francis Drake. There didst thou fill
His heart with beauty, feed his eyes with light.
Like a young eagle, gazing on a glory
Deeper than even he knew, there did he spread
And shut and spread those eager untried wings
Whose kingly power should bear him soon through
 heaven,
Climb with the dawn, majestic pulse for pulse,
And waft him round the world. So prosper thou
His voyage in my song ; for more than his
My need is, even than when he first set sail
In secret, with three ships and three-score men,
Not knowing if he went to life or death,
Nor caring greatly, so that he were true
To his own soul, which could not choose but hear
Through that red turbulence of the Spanish Main,
One deeper whisper, one undying call,
From ever-fading, ever-new horizons,
And shores beyond the sunset and the sea.

THE QUEEN'S SWORD.

(From Book I.)

IN Gloriana's dark old council-hall
The weather-shrewd pilots of her storm-tossed realm
Were privily mustering ; for the threat of war
Was growing like thunder on the south-west wind.
The late light, near the windows, flickered on steel,
Burned on a ruby hilt, or softly bloomed
On such a cloak as Titian loved to paint
In days when colour warmed the world like wine.
Here, in the dusk, like a feather of sunset-cloud

A plumed cap kindled. There, in the mellow gloom,
 A doublet, slashed with rich Italian hues
 Darkened or gleamed ; but lean brown faces of men
 Eagled it over the splendour. Storm-shrewd eyes
 Looked at the shadow of doom upon their seas,
 And challenged it,

They waited for their Queen.

And now, the long bright silver trumpets pealed.
 The tapers flashed. Tall waxen torches burned.
 The hidden throng blazed out into the light ;
 And, stately, between their bending ranks,
 She passed to her throne.

Then, with a clash of swords

All took their seats. The hush that gripped all hearts
 Was charged with lightning. The dark fire of war
 Smouldered in every eye.

First, Walsingham

Arose and spoke his thought ;

“ England, her queen,

And you, my lords, are surely at one to-night.
 What choice is ours when every sea-wind tells
 Of English galleons, grappled and gutted and sunk ;
 Of English seamen lashed to the galley-bench,
 Flung into dungeons, burned in a yellow fool’s coat
 By those red hands of Spain. She has locked all lands
 In her imperial chains ; but not the sea.
 There lies your freedom, in that untamed realm.
 Set all your ships and seamen free to claim it.”

But, over all the murmurs of assent,
 Round-shouldered Burghley rose and, with a smile
 Of half-ironic admiration, praised him.
 Then, watching close the small white face of the queen,
 Clear-cut as a cameo over her wide-winged ruff,
 And knowing her woman’s craft would still prefer
 His own more subtle strength, he straight began
 To chill their fever.

“ Would that I might regain
 That reckless, forth-right heart of fire,” he said.
 But though my way be tortuous, it makes straight
 The way of England. If it serve that end

Her friends would call it wisdom. You know well"—
 Shrewdly he watched that small white clear-cut face
 Hardening to steel—"How Mary of Scotland waits
 To strike us in the side. In England still
 Are many who pine to warm their hands again
 At Spanish faggots, heaped on Smithfield fires."

"So be it," growled Effingham, "painted figure-heads
 Of Fleets Invincible make good fire-wood, Burghley!"—

"France," echoed Burghley, with his cold grave smile,
 "France, hunting down her Huguenots, would kill
 In English woods, before your ships brought home
 Those faggots, my lord admiral. Half the world
 Awaits its hour to strike at us. What shield
 Can England raise? I say that open war
 Would shatter us; and piracy, my lords,
 Is black, whoever practise it. Our hands
 Are not untainted. Hawkins in the west"—

"Had pitch upon his hands," cried Howard again.

"My lords, the Spaniard had destroyed all law
 Beyond the line. God's death, must Spain haul down
 All flags, forbid all cargoes but her own?"

Then through the halberds at the black-winged doors
 A voice demanded entrance; and the guards
 Made way; and through that conclave surged the blood
 Of Agincourt; as up to the foot of the throne
 Strode Leicester. Hard behind him, with wild eyes,
 Grey lips and twisted body, a man in rags,
 A seaman—for the tawny weather-stains
 Were not yet faded from his face and throat—
 Came stumbling.

"Look," said Leicester, in a voice
 Level and low and deadly as a sword.

"Before you judge our privateers, Lord Burghley,
 Look on Spain's work. He fell into her hands
 On one of our chief city merchant's ships,
 The *Pride of London*, one of Osborne's ships.
 He has lain beside his comrades on the rack.
 Look in his eyes. They'll show you, like a glass,
 The glare of the torture chamber. He escaped—
 How, let him tell you."

“ I cannot tell it, sirs,
I cannot tell it.” The seaman’s voice that, once,
Bore down the gale, quavered and broke, as the cry
Of a sea-mew driven before it.

“ I escaped,
Because,”—he smiled a wild-eyed dreadful smile—
“ Because my heart failed and I answered all
As they would have me answer. All the rest
Were brave, sirs, very brave. I was their captain ;
And so the Spaniard, being very subtle,
Made me a crueller rack of my own thought ;
For, when they stretched my naked spirit there,
It bore worse pangs than flesh could ever feel.
O, sirs, I only see blind faces round me ;
Blind faces, each a bruise of white that smiles
In idiot agony, dribbling water and blood,
The face of some strange thing that once was man
And now can only turn from side to side
Babbling like a child, with mouth agape,
Where there is none to help it, none to hear,
But those black vizards in the furnace-glow,
Moving like devils at their hellish trade.
Sirs, I escaped.”

The sweat ran down his face.
He shook from head to foot. A crazy laugh
Broke from his lips.

“ Yet something I did bear
Even in my flesh for England. You shall see it.”

He paused. His memory sickened. His brain swooned
Back into that wild glare of obscene pain.
Once more to his ears and nostrils horribly crept
The hiss and smell of shrivelling human flesh.
His head sank down, struggling in agony
With what all hideous words must leave untold,
He clutched the filthy rags upon his breast,
Tore them wide open, and shewed above his heart,
Seared in white lettering by the white-hot iron,
A word for England, branded there by Spain.

One low deep mutter, like that darker warning
 When the storm gathers its might, and the sea draws back
 To leap upon its prey, broke from all lips
 And died again.

The voice of Walsingham
 Rang like a trumpet through the council-hall,
 "England has but one answer now to Spain.
 Let all her seas deliver it!"

Then the Queen,
 Elizabeth, rose; and, in her tense hard face,
 The imprisoned passion glowed like white-hot steel:
 "My lords, this is the last cry they shall wring
 From English lips unheeded. Have no fear,
 My lord of Burghley. We shall not destroy
 This England with an ill-timed stroke. And you,
 Walsingham, trust us also; for we know
 Our answer now. Only a little while,"—
 She dropt her voice to a whisper—"it must be dark.
 It must be wide and secret as our sea.
 And you, Lord Howard of Effingham"—her face
 Gleamed like the face of a prophetess who looks
 Through far horizons—"tell your Catholic friends
 We'll wage no war of creeds; for you and I
 Think first of England. I will be Head of the Name
 In this cause only; and when your children's children
 Ask for a tale around the sea-coal fire
 They shall see Fleets Invincible burning in it,
 And hear how one small island set her heel
 On Spain's imperial throat."

On that same night,
 Drake, in a Greenwich tavern, lay concealed;
 For Spain, if it were peace, would have him die
 A pirate's death. There, all alone, he pored
 By a struggling rush-light over his well-thumbed charts,
 Re-sailing his late voyage, by palmy keys,
 Woods of green parrots and sweet-mouthed Indian isles.
 Charts, painted like a picture, in fair colours,
 His brown hands turned, charts of the Spanish Main;
 Of Mexico, where Spain had lashed his crew
 On horse-back, naked, though the hot white streets;

Of San Domingo, island city of fruits,
Blood-marked, for payment by his guns, one day ;
Of Darien, and his hidden harbour there,
Port Pheasant, marked *Here fish and birds abound* ;
Of Nombre Dios Bay, long since inscribed
Here Cimaroons will guide you through the woods
To El Dorado ; and one great fabulous chart,
Wavering and vague in outline as a cloud,
But marked with an old red thumb-print, where a hand
Had clutched it as chief treasure, even in death,
On Drake's first prize,—the secret Spanish chart
Of coasts that met the unknown Pacific sea.
There, as the flood-tide filled it from the west,
He saw the golden Orinoco shine.
There, fired with sunset to their crooked hearts,
Old harbours, crowned with crumbling peach-stained
walls,
Glowed upon coasts with names like Spanish bells,
Castille del Oro, peeling through its palms,
Beragua, *Nicaragua* and *Peru*.

Hope whispered ; but he dared not listen yet.
He bent above his charts, as in a cave
Of pirate booty, a seaman long-marooned
Upon an eastern island, weighs in vain
His raw rubines, his hyacinths and pearls.
He tiptoes to the heap. He glances round
Askance. He dreads to hear what erst he hoped,
A voice to break the hush. He kneels. He bathes
His gnarled brown arms with laughter in that cold fire.
He lets it trickle through his fevered palms,
Counts it, recounts it, losing count each time
For wonder at it. Meanwhile, if he knew
Passing the cave mouth, easily in hail,
A sail that might have saved him comes and goes,
And never comes again.

So Francis Drake
Counted his hidden treasure ; but that sail
Passed not unseen ; for now, like fate, there came
A firm and heavy footstep to the door ;
Then a loud knocking ; and, at first, he thought

“ Death brings his warrant. There is peace with Spain ! ”
But, as he looked across one shoulder, pride
Checking the fuller watch for what he feared,
The door opened ; and cold as from the sea
The night rushed in, and there against the gloom,
Clad, as it seemed, with wind and cloud and rain,
There loomed a stately form and high grim face
Loaded with deadly thoughts of iron war—
Walsingham. In one hand he held a map
Marked with red lines. The other hand held down
The hilt of his lean sword. As when two eagles,
After blind wheelings through the storm-wrack, meet
On the same crag in silence, while the world
Unfolds below them through a rifted cloud,
Eyes challenged eyes, ablaze with what they saw.

The seaman rose. The soldier, cautiously
Closing the door, drew near the flickering light
And spread his map out on the table saying
“ Mark for me here the points where we must strike,
To break this power at sea ; King Philip’s heel ;
The joints in his harness,”

And Drake looked at him,
Thinking, “ If he betrays me, I am dead.”
But Walsingham met his eyes and, with a laugh,
Drake, quivering like an eagle on poised wings
That freeze to stillness over the prey far down
Below, and quiver again as it moves on,
Stooped, with his finger pointing thus and thus—
“ Here would I guard, here would I lie in wait,
Here would I strike him through the breast and throat.
Here are the secret fountains of his power
Beyond the Spanish Main,—Potosi’s mines,
Where all day long his naked Indians dig
A sunset from the rocks ; for, in the cliffs
That face the sunset and reflect its fires,
Another sunset burns, engendered there
Some say, by those warm colours of the sky ;
A sunset of raw emeralds, blood rubines,
And hyacinths clustering in great veins of gold.
It is no dream ; for here, by Panama,

Along the Cordilleras' tawny spurs
His mule-trains drag that sunset overland
To load the ships in Nombre Dios Bay.
But there he is on his guard. He is strong enough
To meet a navy there. Sir, I would strike him
Here, in his unattainable western sea.
Here, at one swoop, we might tear out the heart
Of all his riches ; ballast our ships with it ;
And bring it home to England. We could build
A fleet with it, a power to match his own
And sail in freedom, then, on every sea.

Then as he spoke, he kindled, and began,
To set forth his great dreams ; and, as the moon,
Rising behind a mighty mountain-chain,
Will shadow forth in outline grim and black
Its vast and ragged edges, so that light
Of dreams, reflecting the true sun unseen,
Dawned upon Walsingham, and he, too, saw
For a moment of muffled moonlight and wild cloud
The proud sea-kingdom of the years to be.
But, even there, Drake paused, as one who strays
Beyond the bounds of caution, paused and cursed
His tongue for prating like a moon-struck boy's.
" I am mad," he cried. " I am mad to babble so."
Then Walsingham drew near him with strange eyes
And muttered slowly, " Write that madness down,
Sign it, and let me take it to the Queen."
But the weather-wiser seaman warily
Answered him, " If it please Almighty God
To take our Queen Elizabeth to heaven,
Seeing that she is mortal as ourselves,
England might then be leagued with Spain, and I
Should here have knotted a rope around my neck.
I will write nothing."

So, across the charts
With that dim light on each grim countenance
The seaman and the courtier subtly fenced
With words and thoughts, but neither would betray
His whole heart to the other. At the last

Walsingham gripped the hand of Francis Drake
And left him wondering.

On the third night came
A messenger from Walsingham who bade
Drake to the palace. There the statesman met him
And led him, with flushed cheek and beating heart,
Along an echoing gallery, to a room
With carven black-winged doors. Under their feet
They found a quietness as of fallen bloom.
Heaped on the deep-set hearth great beech-logs burned.
The soft red firelight fluttered on tapestries
From Flanders looms, leapt on their hounds and stags ;
Or flushed, like colours from an evening sky,
Through forest-work : great knights with hawk on hand,
Riding for ever on their glimmering steeds
To their Belphebe, that star-glorious face
Beyond the fairy fringes of the world.

Near the broad hearth, arranged as for a game,
An ebony chess-board stood, inlaid with squares
Of ruby and emerald, garnished with cinque-foils
Of silver, bears and ragged staves ; the gift
Of Leicester, and his ancient arms. The men,
Bishops, and knights and elephants and pawns,
Were made of precious stones. Sixteen were set
In silver white, the other sixteen gilt.

And as, for seeing eyes, the lives, loves, fates
Of all are written, even against their will,
On their own faces and within their houses,
So, close behind the darkly shining board
On the innermost wall, another parable shone.
There, the most delicate tissued cloth of all
Portrayed in glistening robes of gold and blue,
Penelope, with cold hands weaving still
The unending web, while in an outer court
The broad-limbed wooers, basking in the sun
On soft brown ox-hides, took from white-armed girls
Their golden bowls of wine. 'Tis thus, Drake thought,
Our own Penelope of England weaves
Her darker web, and ever again at night

Unravels it, to gain time for England's sake.
 There, as he gazed, either the pictured arras
 Moved, or the shadows tricked him. Well had it been
 Had he drawn sword and stabbed it through and through.
 He saw the firelight fluttering. Little he thought
 In that still room of the gilded palace-rats,
 The spies of Spain, or courtier-spies. His mind
 Was quietly drawn elsewhither ; for he heard
 Music within, the strings of a low lute,
 An air of Dowland, like a choir of birds
 At daybreak, after rain, in an April wood ;
 And then a maiden singing ; to Queen Bess,
 Or so he thought, for that great lonely spirit
 Seemed to be near, and listening, but to thoughts
 Beyond the music's reach.

Thus, long ago,
 In Ithaca, the careless minstrel sang
 Before the wooers, and the Queen laid down
 Her endless web to listen. Like a shadow
 She stole from the upper chamber. All unseen,
 She stood beside a pillar of the door,
 Covered her face and wept to find her grief
 Too lonely for the song.

SONG.

Now the purple night is past,
 Now the moon more faintly glows,
 Dawn has through thy casement cast
 Roses, on thy breast, a rose.
 Now the kisses are all done.
 Now the world awakes anew.
 Now the charmed hour is gone,
 Let not love go, too.

When old winter creeping nigh
 Mists with grey the golden hair,
 Dims the brightly glancing eye,
 Steals the joy that gentled there,

Lad and lass imperial,
Doff your crowns of sun and dew !
Leaf by leaf your glories fall.
Let not love go, too.

Palaces and towers of pride
Crumble, year by year, away,
Creeds like robes are laid aside.
Even our very tombs decay.
When the all-conquering moth and rust
Gnaw the princely raiment through,
When the dust returns to dust,
Let not love go, too.

The song ceased. On the quiet air a power
Was darkly brooding. A curtain rustled aside,
And fell back, like a shadow. Then, Drake saw
Standing before him in the firelit gloom,
Pale, slender, proud, Elizabeth, the Queen.
All England in one woman, she drew near.
Behind her aquiline head, the ruff's wide wings
Gleamed like a phantom butterfly. Emerald sparks
Flashed in her red-gold hair. Her glimmering robe
Of white and green, was broidered round the hems
With grey doves' wings and serpents' emerald eyes,
And leaf-like listening ears of fox and fawn.
The buckles on her small green shoes burned red
As fairy gold, in the firelight at her feet.
But, in her face, a moment and no more
He caught a glimpse of an immortal power,
More beautiful than all her Dian's grace,
Terrible, haunting, sadder than the grave.
For, as a flame leapt upward on the hearth
She turned her head a little. Her profile there,
With all its delicate clear-cut agate, shone
Stern as the death-mask of the Roman Cæsar
Gazing, through life and the world's unending war,
On his eternal City ; an eagle face
With something of the austerer Florentine
Whom Virgil led through fire.

She turned. It vanished.
All woman again, she smiled. "I have long wished
To talk with Captain Drake, that wicked pirate."
He knelt before her.

Walsingham, bowing low
Withdrew ; then England caught her seaman's hands
And raised him to his feet.

His whole heart burned
Knowing he talked with England, face to face.
He stood there, like a youthful knight at arms
Before his Gloriana.

"My friend," she said,
"I have looked for truth too long in courtier's eyes.
Thank God, in yours, I see those honest friends
The sky and sea, deep friends that I can trust.
We must gain time. We are not ripe for war.
Time, time, is our chief need. But never think
I lack our ancient fire. I am still Tudor,
And neither wholly meek, nor yet a king.
There is a Hand upon this helm of state
Guiding our England—and it is not mine ;
But I can feel its ordinance and obey.
I cannot see the goal to which it steers ;
And, as the winds change, so must I change too.
Let me be counted in the years to come
A wavering fool, because I blindly obey
The Power that guides our country to its goal.
Kings might have driven our ship to instant doom.
Therefore God armed me, in the appointed hour,
For England's sake, a woman and a queen.
They mock me for my thrift. I know it. I found
My country feeble. I will leave her mighty.
I will build up our England. If I hoard
My revenues like a miser—let them say it.
I gather my strength up as a woman draws
Her life into the breast that feeds her babe.
But were I thriftier even than fools account me
I'd furnish forth thy ships. Put out to sea.
Let Burghley call thee 'pirate' for a while ;
And though I must disown thee, and even feign

A willingness to hang thee, Drake"—she smiled—
 "I share thy peril daily.

They reproach me,
 My counsellors, that I keep two nations dangling.
 They'd have me wed my speckled frog of France
 And crown him at my side to frighten Spain.
 He is Queen Catherine's son. He knows her tricks.
 A drugged rose, little grains of powdered glass,
 A poisoned glove might conquer England, then ;
 And set my murderer with the Queen of Scots,
 Exultant on my throne. 'Decide ! Decide !'
 My wise men clamour. Could they only know
 One half, one hundredth of my intricate task !
 I take my woman's way. On every side
 Spain lies in wait for me. The assassin crept
 Behind me, in my garden, yesternight
 Fingering his hilt. I saw it by the moon
 Cold as death's eye ; but, though I turned to meet him
 Alone, England was with me, for I found
 Only his dagger, lying at my feet.
 Remember, then, though I desert thee, Drake,
 I also wage this war. Put out to sea.
 Ransack their golden harbours of the west ;
 And though, at first, thou needs must sail alone,
 And undefended, ere that end be reached,
 When I shall give the word, nay, but one word,
 All England shall be up and after thee,
 The sword of England shall shine over thee
 And round about thee like a guardian fire.

Meanwhile, we must be cautious. Let no word
 Escape thee. That strong prophet of the law,
 Burghley, would wreck thy voyage, if he knew.
 He is my king of statesmen ; and I chose him ;
 But England now takes counsel with her sea.

Hostis humani generis is Spain.

Thine is no piracy. Nay, but take this sword,"—
 She drew a glimmering weapon from the wall
 And thrust the hilt towards him like a cross.
 "Take it," she said, "a sign twixt thee and me,

That I, the lawful and anointed queen
 Of England send thee out, where law is none,
 To execute my judgment, on all seas.
 Nay, let me buckle it round thee with my hands ! ”
 There, at the word, she stooped to him. His Queen,
 England, stooped down to him and all his heart
 Filled with her beauty, as her slim hands drew
 The sword-belt round him, and the firelight shook
 His worship and her glory in one flame.
 “ Farewell,” she said.

He bent above her hand,
 A slender fragrant hand. “ God speed thee, Drake.”
 Then, through the dusk, drawing a curtain back,
 She vanished, like a spirit of incantation ;
 And Drake, one hand upon his proud new hilt,
 Strode out, afire with thought.

At once, behind him
 The embroidered arras moved. A lean dark face,
 Grey with its long eaves-dropping upon death,
 Peered after him sharply, like a listening rat.
 Then, like a streak of shadow, out slipt the spy
 To seek his master, Doughty—a friend of Drake,
 In former years, but Burghley’s watch-dog now.

Few suns had risen and set ere Drake made ready
 Five ships, with guns and men, old sea-companions
 From Bideford and Clovelly, Tavy and Dart ;
 Lads that had fought the Spaniard at San Juan ;
 Tried weather-beaten sea-dogs, old Tom Moon,
 Will Harvest, who could sing a fo’c’sle song
 To cheer sea-weary hearts ; and, after these,
 Some two-score gentlemen adventurers,
 Blithe college lads and lawyers, whose young blood,
 Chilled by the dusty Temple, leapt anew
 At tales of the rich Indies and tall ships
 Laden with ingots and broad bars of gold.
 Already some had bought at a great price
 Green birds of Guatemala, which they wore
 On their slouched hats, tasting the high romance
 And new-found colours of the world like wine.
 By night they gathered in a black-beamed inn

Beside the dark and secret-flowing Thames,
 And joyously tossed about a phrase that glowed
 With perilous opal fire—a battered phrase
 Old as Aladdin's lantern, whence a touch
 Awoke a magical power—*The Spanish Main*.
 Night after night, round their deep hearth, they filled
 With blood-red wine their mighty loving cup
 Of hammered silver, captured long ago
 By Hawkins, in the West, and carrying still
 The dints of that rough tussle. Up to the brims
 They filled and passed the ponderous glory round
 Drinking to England and to Francis Drake.
 Among them came a courtier. No man knew,
 Or asked who brought him ; for he made his way
 Cautiously, being a man with a smooth tongue.
 His name was Doughty. Most of all with Drake
 His friendship grew and deepened, till at last
 There seemed one heart between them and one soul.

OUTWARD BOUND.

(From Book II.)

FROM Plymouth Sound, with a crisp December wind,
 Five ships put out to a mackerel-coloured sea.
 It was their second sailing. A black storm
 Had struck their first, and driven them headlong home
 Dismasted, and wing-broken like wounded gulls,
 Before they had climbed their first Atlantic wave.
 Bold ships,—their flag-ship only a hundred tons,
 Their least too small for a North Sea fishing fleet,—
 Re-masted with Dartmoor pines, and ready once more
 To dare the unfathomed night of the world's-end oceans,
 Undauntedly, out to the swinging deep, they sailed.
The Pelican led the way, an immortal glory,
 Ere long to be named anew *The Golden Hind*.
 With three new masts that smelt of a sun-warmed coombe
 Beneath Hey Tor, she carried in her strong heart
 The fate of England. A gray spray-misted throng
 That seemed to rise and fall with the heaving tide
 Waved from the Hoe. They saw her captain, Drake,

High on the scutcheoned poop. His trim gold beard
And crimson velvet cap shone vivid and sharp
As jeweller's work against a sun-washed sail.
The herring-gulls mewed around him, as he watched
All drawing, aloft, alow. Already she held
A white bone in her teeth. Her cannon grinned
Through dripping jaws of grim heraldic beasts,
Carven and gilded and gleaming with gem-like hues ;
But, under the fair wet colours, her hard oak hull
Was built like a wave, or a stag, for strength and speed.
Black as an ebony figure-head in her bows
Diego soared, athirst for his land of palms.
One foot on a red wet anchor, he crooned to the clouds
The savage old Cimaroon war-cry, *Yo Peho*.
The clean green water around him swashed and sang ;
And, high overhead, with the crackle of musketry,
St George's banner burned on the North-east wind.

Full in her milk-white wake, a fair new ship
Commanded by John Winter, a queen's captain,
The Elizabeth walked, a glittering sea-god's bride,
With streamers flying from all her slender spars
And all her close-fights hung with painted shields.
The Christopher next, a pinnacle of fifteen tons,
Leapt out like a greyhound, leashed by old Tom Moon.
The Marygold, with her sixteen polished guns,
Raced on his lee. Last, loaded deep with stores,
The Swan sailed, wallowing in her own bright foam.

And now, as though they went to a bridal feast,
A mellowing breeze of music filled their sails,
Airs of delight, from silver tubes and strings ;
For, on their decks, the skilled musicians played
Whom Drake had brought to speed the boundless leagues
Of ocean, with old memories and new joy ;
Not idly, but because the hearts of men
Grow mighty in song, and music moves the world.

Their crews, all told, were eight score men and boys.
They braved not only death's familiar face
Under known skies ; but witch-crafts of the abyss

Beyond them, and the naked edge of doom.
 Yet their first danger menaced them from within,
 Not from without. Their foremost enemy stood
 —Stands always, in this voyage of man's life—
 Unchallenged, on their flag-ship, like a friend.
 Doughty stood smiling there. Drake turned to him,
 And, as the great rough coast-line opened out
 Beyond St Nicholas Island, pointed West
 Across the bulwarks, naming the well-loved names.
 "There lies Barn Pool, beyond our wooded Ida,
 Mount Edgcumbe, the dark beauty, with her pines.
 That wide curved welter of silver is Cawsand Bay.
 And there—that sparkle of foam is Penlee Point.
 I have swum there ; fished for bass, there. We shall find
 No better country upon the sunset road.
 But, if our wings go wild, 'tis good to know
 This will not change. Home-keeping herring-gulls
 Will still be wheeling here. They will not lose
 One brown speck in that pattern on their wings."
 And Doughty laughed,—“ If we return and find
 A Spaniard on the throne.”

Drake looked up quickly
 “ I should put down my helm again,” he said,
 “ And raid him till he sunk me.”

As he spoke,
 The thin, cold hand of a prophetic fear
 Touched Doughty ; for he thought, “ If he suspect me,
 The strange fanatical furnace in this man
 Will shrivel all shams to ashes.”

But, at once,
 He shook the thought off ; for Drake smiled at him,
 Saying, “ Come down, and drink a cup of sack
 To our return.”

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THE EXECUTION OF DOUGHTY.

(From Book III.)

AND Drake, still seeking everywhere a sign
 To guide him, went ashore upon that isle ;
 And, as he turned a rugged point of rock,
 He saw—a sign, like Death's own hieroglyph,
 Scrawled by an awful hand against the sky ;
 For stark upon that lonely shore there stood
 With broken arm-stump pointing out his way,
 The grim black gallows where Magellan hanged
 His mutineers. Wreathed with a rusty chain
 A skeleton lay below it, flaked and white,
 Picked by the gulls, and crumbling over the sand
 A dread sea-salt, dry from the tides of time ;
 Though, twisted still around the stump above,
 Some links of chain, in the low soft evening wind,
 Swung gently, quietly tinkled.

It stood there,
 Death's finger-post, like a forgotten truth
 Risen from the grave of memory, a ghost
 Reproaching him. "*Were this man not thy friend,
 Ere now he should have died the traitor's death.
 What wilt thou say to others if they, too,
 Prove false ? Or wilt thou slay the lesser and save
 The greater sinner ? Nay, if thy right hand
 Offend thee, cut it off.*" And, in one flash,
 Drake saw his path and chose it.

With a voice
 Low as the passionless utterance of a soul
 That comprehends all pain, but girds it round
 With iron, lest some random cry break out
 For man's misguidance, he gathered all his crews
 Around him, saying, " Ye all know how I loved
 Doughty, who hath betrayed me twice and thrice.
 For I still trusted him. He was no felon
 That I should turn my heart away from him.
 But now there comes a time when greater right
 On lesser right must wage a bleaker war
 Than ever it waged on wrong. He served his cause

Unswervingly, as I must now serve mine.
 He serves the cause of Burghley, who believes
 He serves his country. But in these my hands,
 England herself, Elizabeth, the Queen,
 Laid her own sword, for judgment on her seas.
 Here are no laws but those our souls can make,
 Who sail and seek a world beyond the worlds,
 A vision past our seeing. I dare not judge.
 But ye who know the mighty goal we seek,
 Ye who have seen him stir continual strife,
 Ye who have seen him strike this last sharp blow,
 Sharper than any enemy could have struck,
 Because I loved and trusted him, judge ye.
 His life is yours, if truth will let him live ;
 But, if ye think the truth would have him die,
 Hold up your hands in silence."

His voice dropped,
 And eagerly he whispered one quick word
 Beyond the scope of Fate. "In spite of all,
 I would not have him die !"

He bowed his head
 And waited. On that desolate shore they stood,
 A silent throng, with tawny faces, bowed
 As if in prayer. Along that lonely coast
 The rhythmic thunder of eternal seas
 With its unchanging measure, seemed the voice
 Of universal law. At last, one man
 Up-thrust his arm. Then a grey rustling throng
 Of shadows lengthened on the sunlit sand
 Under Drake's eyes. He raised his head and saw
 A brawny forest of brown arms up-raised
 In silence, and the great sea whispered *Death*.

And Doughty laughed and said, "Since I must die,
 Let us have one more hour of comradeship,
 One hour as old companions. Though we go
 By different roads, it may be we shall meet
 One day in England's honour. Let us make
 A feast here, on this island, ere I go
 Where none may feast again."

Then Francis Drake
 Held out his right sun-blackened hand and gripped

The hand that Doughty proffered him ; and they made
A great and solemn banquet as the day
Decreased ; and Doughty bade them all unlock
Their sea-chests and bring out their rich array.
There, by that wondering ocean of the west,
In crimson doublets, lined and slashed with gold
In brodered lace and double golden chains
Embossed with rubies and great cloudy pearls
They feasted, gentlemen adventurers,
Drinking old malmsey, as the sun went down.

And Doughty, fronting the rich death of day
And flourishing a silver pouncet-box,
With many a courtly jest and rare conceit
Out-braved them all ; for like a sunset cloud
His murrey-coloured doublet, double-piled
Of Genoa velvet, puffed with cypress, shone ;
But over against him, clad in midnight black,
With midnight silver slashed, sat Francis Drake.
He watched, not feasting, for he raised the cup
And set it down untasted. As the sun
Grew ripe for death they rose. The Eternal spoke
In breaking waves ; and, black against their gold,
The gallows of Magellan stretched its arm.
Over the skeleton clicked that rusty chain.
It swung and tinkled in the solemn breath
Of evening, like a pendulum, measuring out
The moments that remained. There, side by side,
Among the rocks, the prisoner and the men
Who judged him, took the holy sacrament,
Of Jesus' Body and Blood. Then Doughty and Drake
Kissed each other, as brothers, on the cheek ;
And Doughty knelt. And Drake, without one word,
Leaning upon the two-edged naked sword
Stood at his side, with iron lips, and eyes
Full of the sunset, while the doomed man bowed
His head upon a rock. The red sun dropped
Behind a cloud. The land and sea grew dark.
Then Drake swung up the great two-handed sword
Over his head. It seemed to sweep the heavens
Down in its arc as he smote, once, and no more.

Silence, for one dread moment, froze their veins,
Till, with a strange hoarse cry, a seaman stooped
And, like an eagle clutching up its prey,
His arm swooped down and bore the head aloft,
Gorily streaming, by the long dark hair.
And hoarsely rose their shout—" So perish all
Traitors ! " But, with a face of cold grey stone,
Drake turned to them and bade them to their ships.
Wondering, they left him. As they thrust from shore
They saw him, leaning still upon his sword.
Larger and darker from his loftier ground,
Against the slowly gathering night of stars
He stood like granite, by his quiet dead,
Still than death, and gazing out to sea.

THE APPROACH OF THE ARMADA.

(From Book IX.)

EMPTY and cold, indifferent as death,
The sea heaved strangely to the seamen's eyes,
Seeing all round them only the leaden surge
Wrapped in wet mists or flashing here and there
With crumbling white. Against the cold wet wind
Westward the struggling ships of England beat
With short tacks, close inshore, striving to win
The windward station of the threatening battle.
Close-hauled, with many a short tack, struggled and
 strained,
North-west, South-west, the ships ; but Westward
 gained
Some little way with every tack ; and soon,
While the prows plunged beneath the grey-gold noon,
Lapped by the crackling waves, even as the wind
Died down a little, in the mists behind
There stole from Plymouth Sound the struggling score
Of ships that might not win last night to sea.
They followed ; but the Six went on before,
Not knowing, to meet the Invincible enemy.

Now, as they tacked north-west, the sullen roar
Of reefs crept out, or some strange tinkling sound
Of sheep-bells on the hills. South-west once more
The bo'sun's whistle swung their bowsprits round ;

South-west until the long low lapping splash
Was all they heard, of keels that still ran out
Seaward, then with one muffled heave and crash
Once more the whistles brought their sails about.

And now the noon began to wane. The west
With slow rich colours filled and shadowy forms,
Dark curdling wreaths and fogs with crimsoned breast,
And tangled zones of dusk, like frozen storms,

Motionless, flagged with sunset, hulled with doom !
Motionless ? Nay, across the darkening deep
Surely the whole sky moved its gorgeous gloom
Onward ; and like the curtains of a sleep

The red fogs crumbled, mists dissolved away !
There, like death's secret dawning thro' a dream,
Great thrones of thunder dusked the dying day,
And, higher, pale towers of cloud began to gleam.

There, in one heaven-wide storm, great masts and clouds
Of sail crept slowly forth, the ships of Spain !
From north to south, their tangled spars and shrouds
Controlled the slow wind as with bit and rein.
Onward they rode in insolent disdain
Sighting the little fleet of England there,
While o'er the sullen splendour of the main
Three solemn guns tolled all their host to prayer,
And their great ensign blazoned all the doom-fraught air.

The sacred standard of their proud crusade
Up to the mast-head of their flag-ship soared :
On one side knelt the Holy Mother-maid,
On one the crucified Redeemer poured

His blood. And all their kneeling hosts adored
Their saints, and clouds of incense heavenward
streamed,
While pomp of cannonry and pike and sword
Down long sea-lanes of mocking menace gleamed,
And chant of priests rolled out o'er seas that darkly
dreamed.

Who comes to fight for England ? Is it ye,
Six little straws that dance upon the foam ?
Ay, sweeping o'er the sunset-crimsoned sea
Let the proud pageant in its glory come,
Leaving the sunset like a hecatomb
Of souls whose bodies yet endure the chain !
Let slaves, by thousands, branded, scarred and dumb,
In those dark galleys grip their oars again,
And o'er the rolling deep bring on the pomp of Spain.

Bring on the pomp of royal paladins
(For all the princedoms of the land are there !)
And for the gorgeous purple of their sins
The choral chant bring on with psalm and prayer.
Nearer the splendour heaves. Can ye not hear
The rushing foam, not see the blazoned arms,
And black-faced hosts thro' leagues of golden air
Crowding the decks, muttering their beads and charms
To where, in furthest heaven, they thicken like locust-
swarms ?

Bring on the pomp and pride of old Castille.
Blazon the skies with royal Aragon.
Beneath Oquendo let old ocean reel.
All Andalusia's armoured pride bring on.
And let her censers dusk the dying sun,
The thunder of her banners on the breeze
Following Sidonia's glorious galleon
Deride the sleeping thunder of the seas,
While sunset-smouldering armies chant her litanies.

Their gorgeous decks are kneeling ! Sky to sky
Responds ! It is their solemn evening hour.
SALVE REGINA, though the daylight die,
SALVE REGINA, though the darkness lour ;
Have they not still the kingdom and the power ?
SALVE REGINA, all their thousands cry,
From where like clouds to where like mountains tower
Their crowded galleons looming far or nigh.
SALVE REGINA CÆLI, what far seas reply !

What distant seas, what distant ages hear ?
Bring on the pomp ! The sun of Spain goes down.
The moon but swells the tide of praise and prayer.
Bring on the world-wide pomp of her renown.
Let darkness crown her with a starrier crown,
And let her watch the fierce waves crouch and fawn
Round those huge hulks from which her cannon frown,
While close inshore the wet sea-mists are drawn
Round England's Drake : then wait, in triumph, for the
dawn.

THE END OF THE ARMADA.

(From Book X.)

Dawn, staining all its myriads of white crests,
Rose like the Angel of Judgment from the deep.
The ships of Spain, great ragged piles of gloom
And shaggy splendour, leaning to the North
Like sun-shot clouds confused, or rent apart
In scattered squadrons, furiously plunged,
Burying their mighty prows in the broad grey rush
Of smoking billowy hills, or heaving high
Their giant bowsprits to the wandering heavens,
Labouring in vain to return, struggling to lock
Their scattered ranks anew, but drifting still
To leeward, driven by the ever-increasing storm
Straight for the dark North Sea.

Hard by there lurched
 One scutcheoned galleon on the ravening shoals,
 Feeding the white maw of the famished waves
 With gold and purple webs from kingly looms,
 The spilth of a world's empire.

Howard still
 Planning to pluck the Armada plume by plume,
 Swooped down upon that prey, and swiftly engaged
 Her desperate guns ; while Drake, our ocean-king
 Knowing the full worth of that conquering hour,
 Signalled the rest to follow his *Revenge*.
 Unswervingly, with calm implacable face
 Gazing as into eternity, he steered
 The crowded glory of his dawn-flushed sails
 In superb onset, straight for the great fleet
 Invincible ; and, after him, the main
 Of England's fleet, knowing its captain now,
 Followed, and with them rushed—from south to north
 One glittering charge of wrath—the storm's white waves.
 Behind the strife of men, embattled deeps
 Beyond all thought, in awful panoply moved
 As under the clash of waves and flash of foam,
 Silent, invisible, move huge ocean-glooms
 Of heaven-drawn power. Northward the storm's white
 waves

Charged with Drake's fleet, glittering companions,
 And poured their thunders on the windward flank
 Of Spain, whose weltering galleons as they lurched
 Heavily to the roughening sea and wind,
 With all their grinding wrenching cannon, worked
 On rolling platforms by the helpless hands
 Of twenty thousand soldiers, without skill
 In stormy seas, rent the indifferent sky
 Or tore the black troughs of the swirling deep
 In vain. But volley on volley of flame and iron
 Savaged their four-foot beams, fierce raking blasts
 From ships that came and went on the south-west wind
 And swept their crowded decks from stem to stern
 Till, through their scuppers, the brine that they shipped
 green

Ran back like blood.

And still the guns of Drake
Pounded their floating streets and timbered towns,
And huddled them on their centre, cities of shame
And havoc, in fiery forests of tangled wrath ;
And tall masts crashed, and swarming spars went by.
The sea's white thunder burst across their decks
And blinded fifty thousand eyes with spray.
Their multitudinous castles heaved and sank
Like earthquake-smitten palaces, when doom
Shakes a whole kingdom down. One mighty hulk
Began to founder and settle. A British captain
Called from his bulwarks, bidding her fierce crew
Surrender and come aboard. Straight through the heart,
With instant death their muskets answered him.
Sink or destroy ! The deadly signal flew
From mast to mast of England. Once, twice, thrice,
A blind sea-fortress heaved her haggled bulk
And with one cry from all her crowded decks,
And one long muttering roar, as into the whirl
Of chaos yawning, sank. The slopes of the sea
A moment swarmed with struggling insect men,
Then scrambling surf and the great grey smoking waves
Hid them for ever. Here a galleasse poured
Blood and green brine through scuppers and torn flanks ;
And there a galleon, wrapped in creeping fire
Suddenly like a great volcano flashed
And shot to the sky a fountain of red flame.
All round it, like black flies, leapt broken spars,
And heads torn from their trunks, and scattered limbs.
Hardly the thrust of a pike away, the ships
Of England flashed and swerved, till in one mass
Of thunder-stricken splendour and struggling gloom
The Armada huddled together. The glory of dawn
That burned along the tempest of its banners
Withered, as on a murderer's face the light
Withers before the accuser. Its guns up-turned,
Dumb helpless mouths in a tangled herd of ships ;
And all its towers and heaven-wide clouds of sail
Shrank to a darkening horror, like the heart

Of Evil, plucked from midnight's blackest pit
With all its curses quivering and alive ;
A monstrous kraken, with a thousand arms,
Torn from the filthiest cavern of the deep
Writhing and spewing forth its venomous fumes
In clean salt air. *Sink or destroy !* all day
The deadly signal flew ; and ever the sea
Swelled higher, and the flashes of the foam
Broadened and leapt and spread as a wild white fire
That flourishes with the wind ; and ever the storm
Drove the grim battle onward to the wild
Menace of the dark North Sea. At set of sun,
Even as below the sea-line the broad disc
Sank like a red-hot cannon-ball through the scurf
Of seething molten lead, the *Santa Maria*
Uttering one cry that rose above the storm,
Went down with all hands, roaring into the dark.
Hardly five rounds of shot were left to Drake.
Gun after gun fell silent, as the night
Deepened—" Yet we must follow them to the north,"
He cried, " or they'll return yet to shake hands
With Parma ! Come, we'll put a brag upon it,
And harry them on as though we lacked for nought ! "
So, when across the swinging smoking seas,
Grey and splendid and terrible broke the day
Once more, the flying Invincible fleet beheld
Close on their weather-beam, steadily dogging them
Like their own shadow, the dark ships of Drake,
Unswerving and implacable. Ever the wind
And sea increased ; till now the heaving deep
Swelled all around them into sulky hills
And rolling mountains, whose majestic crests,
Like wild white flames far blown and savagely flickering
Swept thro' the clouds ; and, on their vanishing slopes,
Past the pursuing fleet began to swirl
Bodies of horses and mules, drowning or drowned,
Cast overboard to lighten the flying ships
Of Spain, and save her water-casks, a trail
Telling of utmost fear. And ever the storm
Roared louder across the leagues of struggling sea,

Driving her onward like a mighty stag
 Chased by the wolves. Off the dark Firth of Forth
 At last, Drake signalled and lay head to wind,
 Watching. "The chariots of God are twenty thousand,"
 He muttered, as, for a moment close at hand,
 Caught in a league-wide maelstrom of black water
 The mighty galleons crowded and towered and plunged
 Above him, on a mountain-slope of sea
 As if to trample him down into the night.
 The next, a mile of surf had swept between,
 And all those dwindling citadels were hurled
 With all their midget shrivelling scrolls of sail,
 Away to the waiting North.

From sky to sky

The chariots and the horsemen of the deep
 Followed them—broad white cataracts, waves that
 grasped
 With struggling Titan hands at reeling heavens,
 And roared their doom-fraught greetings from Cape
 Wrath
 Round to the Bloody Foreland.

There should the yeast

Of foam receive the purple of many kings,
 And the grim gulfs devour the blood-bought gold
 Of Aztecs and of Incas, and the reefs,
 League after league, bristle with mangled spars,
 And murderous kerns of Ireland strip the silks
 And chains and jewel-encrusted crucifixes
 From thousands dead, and slaughter thousands more
 With gallow-glass axes as they blindly crept
 Out of the surf and jagged rocks to seek
 Pity of their own creed.

To meet that doom

Drake watched their sails go shrivelling, till the last
 Flicker of spars vanished as a skeleton leaf
 Upon the blasts of winter, and there was nought
 But one wild wilderness of splendour and gloom
 Under the northern clouds.

"Not unto us,"

Cried Drake, "but unto Him who made the sea

Belongs our England now ! Only to Him
Belongs this victory, whose ocean fame
Shall wash the world with thunder till that day
When there is no more sea, and the strong cliffs
Pass like a smoke, and the last peal of it
Sounds through the trumpet."

So, with close-hauled sails,
Over the rolling triumph of the deep,
Lifting their hearts to heaven, they turned back home.

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